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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

The *Tsymbaly* Maker and His Craft: A Dynamic Musical Tradition in East Central Alberta

by

Mark Jaroslav Bandera

(C)

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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Abstract

Folklorists have recognized that music plays an integral role in the retention and transmission of culture within the Ukrainian immigrant complex in Western Canada. Studies have mentioned *tsymbaly* (Ukrainian hammer dulcimers) in association with the wedding ritual, festivals, and Ukrainian country-western music. Yet, no works have focused on the *tsymbaly* phenomenom. The purpose of this thesis is to characterize the dynamic *tsymbaly* phenomenom in Western Canada.

In this study, the *tsymbaly* tradition is examined through the active *tsymbaly* maker and his craft in East Central Alberta. The setting is provided in Chapter Two, wherein the greater *tsymbaly* phenomenon (its mediums, participants, and roles in music) is discussed. In the two central chapters, (Three and Four) a *tsymbaly* maker is profiled and his process of making *tsymbaly* is detailed. These central chapters are complemented in Chapter Five with an overview of the the community of *tsymbaly* makers and the various manifestations of the craft. Two appendices, a glossary of *tsymbaly* making terms and a list of makers have been added as aids for the reader. In the Conclusion, the various dynamic characteristics of the *tsymbaly* making craft are highlighted.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to those who have aided in the completion of this study. I am deeply indebted to my program and thesis advisor Dr. Bohdan Medwidsky, for the patience, guidance, and encouragement in the preparation of this work. Dr. Peter Rolland deserves a special thanks for aiding in the final editing process. I am also appreciative of the Department of Slavic and East European Studies many-faceted support of my study.

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Finally, I owe thanks to my parents and family. Over the years, they have never failed to encourage the exploration of a wide range of interests. Here as well, their support has sustained me through this milestone in my education.

Table of Contents

Chapter — Page

I. Introduction 1

A. Review of Research in the Field 5

B. Method 11

II. The Use of *Tsymbaly* in East Central Alberta 14

A. Mediums 19

B. Roles in Music 24

C. Related Musical Traditions 28

III. Profile of a *Tsymbaly* Maker 31

A. Tradition 34

B. The Player 36

C. The Craftsman 37

D. Sayings 39

E. The Salesman 41

IV. Constructing *Tsymbaly* 45

A. Skeleton Frame 48

B. Bottom Board [*Spidnia doshka*] 53

C. Facing 54

D. Dowels 56

E. Supporting Bridges [*Pidpory*] 57

F. Painting 59

G. Ornamentation 59

H. Measuring for Pegs and Pins 61

I. Top Bridges [*Konyky*] 64

J. Top Board [*Verkhnia doshka*] 67

K. Sound Holes 68

L. Fitting the Top Board [*Verkhnia Doshka*] 69
M. Playing Sticks [*Pal'tsiatky*] 70
N. Stringing 71
O. Tuning 72
P. Tuning Key [*Kliuch*] 73
V. *Tsymbaly* Making in East Central Alberta 76
A. "It All Started in Andrew" 77
B. Old vs. New 79
C. The *Tsymbaly* Craft Today 83
D. Tuning 87
E. Community 91
F. Marketing 93
Conclusion 96
Bibliography 102
A. Selected Works 102
B. Discs 114
C. Informants 115
Appendix I. Glossary 117
Appendix II. List of *Tsymbaly* Makers 120

List of Figures

Figure		Page
1.	Map of East Central Alberta. Adapted from Julian Stechishin, *Istoriia poselennia ukraintsiv u Kanadi* [History of Ukrainian Settlements in Canada] (Edmonton: Ukrainian Self-Reliance League, 1975), n.p.	2
2.	Photograph of Ostashek Wedding, Wasel: 1933, featuring *troista muzyka*. (Photograph courtesy of John Babichuk, Smoky Lake, Alberta)	15
3.	Photograph of Tom Chychul marketing *tsymbaly* at the Vegreville *Pysanka* Festival, July 1984 (Photograph by Mark Bandera)	32
4.	Notation for a "Wedding March" devised by Tom Chychul	43
5.	Design of Chychul *tsymbaly*, 1979. (Adapted by Yarema Shulakewych, Edmonton: Omni Design Ltd., September 1984)	46
6.	Side block for the skeleton frame (Step 1, end view)	49
7.	Side block for the skeleton frame (Step 2, length view)	49
8.	Side block for the skeleton frame (Step 3, end view)	50
9.	Side block for the skeleton frame (Step 4, end view)	51
10.	Front or back board of the skeleton frame ready for joint	52
11.	Tapered side of the instrument (end view)	55
12.	Dowels inserted through the front into the side blocks	56

13. Support bridge with sound posts 58

14. Grid pattern on sides for drilling pegs or pins 62

15. Markings for openings for top bridges 65

16. Openings in the top bridge 65

17. Top view of end of a top bridge 66

18. Top bridge, full view 67

19. Sound hole on the top board 69

20. Playing stick of "Zelisko" type 71

21. Photograph of Tom Chychul drilling holes for pins into a side block. (Photograph by Mark Bandera) 75

22. Two types of playing sticks used in East Central Alberta 82

23. *Tsymbaly* tuning systems used in East Central Alberta 89

24. *Tsymbaly* tuning systems [continued] 90

I. Introduction

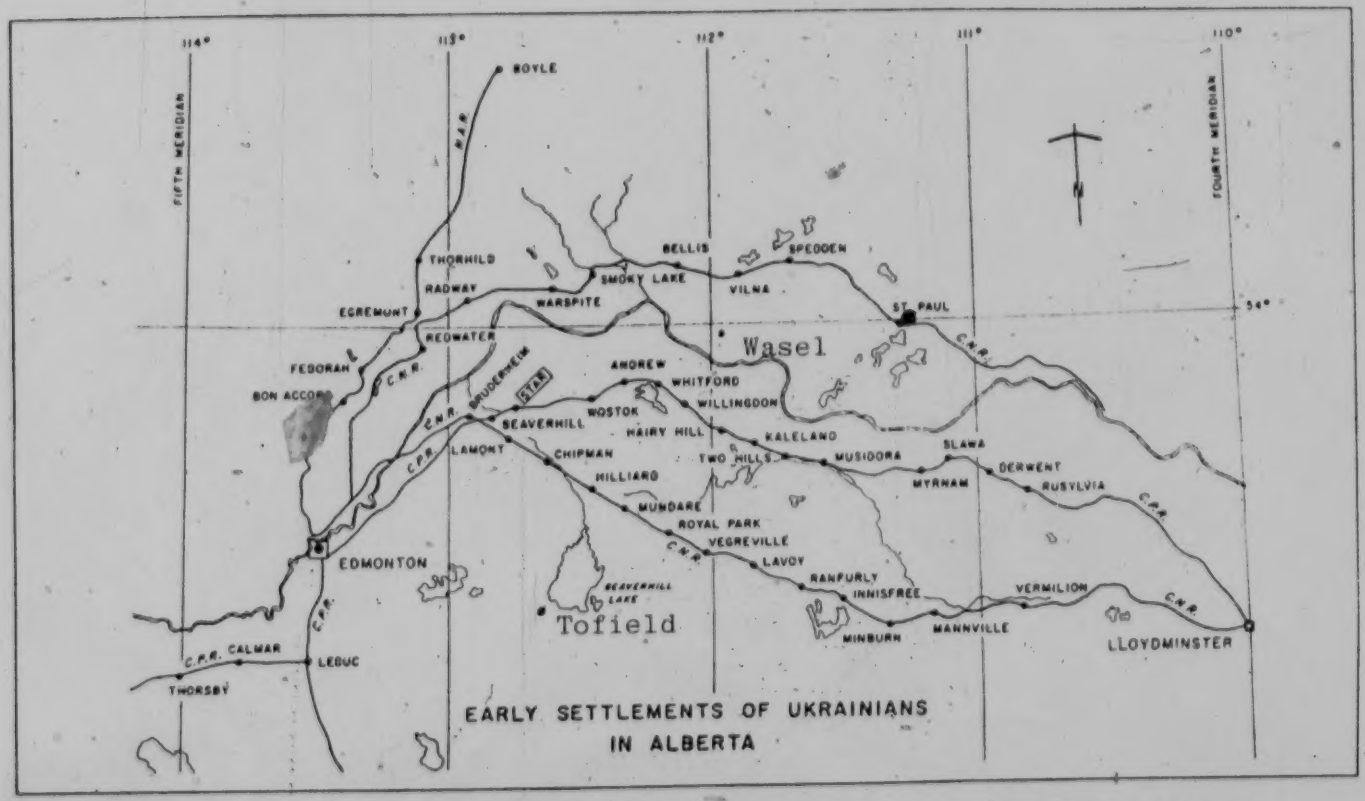

Figure 1. Map of East Central Alberta. Adapted from Julian Stechishin, Istoriia poselennia ukraintsiv u Kanadi (History of Ukrainian Settlements in Canada) (Edmonton: Ukrainian Self Reliance League, 1975), n.p.

Introduction

Tsymbaly[1] (Ukrainian hammer dulcimers) represent a popular present day aspect of the Ukrainian immigrant complex in Western Canada. The distinctive "Old Country sound" of the instrument is heard at weddings and dances, festivals, competitions, in recordings, and on the radio.[2] The investigation of folk musical instruments belongs to the field of ethnomusicology. Bruno Nettl suggests that ethnomusicology may also be considered adjunct to the study of folklore among other fields.[3]

Tsymbaly belong to a group of musical instruments generically called dulcimers, a musical instrument of the zither type (without keyboard) struck with hammers.[4] Dulcimers are distributed throughout much of the Old World. In Western Europe dulcimers are variously known and characterized as *psaltery*, *hackbrett*, or *dulce melos*; in

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[1] In this study, the term *tsymbaly* will be used for the Ukrainian dulcimer and "hammer dulcimer" for other North American variants, in order to help distinguish their respective technical and contextual identities; C.H. Andrusyshen, *Ukrainian English Dictionary* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1955), was used there were questions concerning Ukrainian terminology found in written works or used by informants.

[2] Robert B. Klymasz, "Sounds You Never Before Heard: Ukrainian Country Music in Western Canada," *Ethnomusicology*, 16, No. 3 (1972), pp. 372-80.

[3] Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-nine Issues and Concepts* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1983), pp. 3-4.

[4] Erich M. von Hornbostel and Curt Sachs, "Classification of Musical Instruments," tran. Anthony Baines and Klaus P.Wachsmann, *Galpin Society Journal*, No. 14 (1961), pp. 20-22.

Eastern Europe as *tympanom* or *cymbalom*, in the Middle East as the *santur*, in Middle Asia as the *chang*, and East Asia as the *yang chin*,.[5]

Dulcimers were brought from the British Isles and popularized in North America in the 1800's. They are generally identified as the hammer or hammered dulcimer (or dulcimore) to distinguish them from the more common appalachian or plucked dulcimer. This hammer dulcimer tradition largely died out at the beginning of the 20th century though it has seen a revival in North America in the 1960's.[6]

Old World Ukrainian *tsymbaly* typically consist of a trapezoidal frame (95-130 cm. long, 35-55 cm. wide), a sound board (with 1-4 sound holes), and two bridges. Over 100 strings in groups of 2 to 6 called *bunty* rest on this structure. The *bunty* slope, alternately passing over one bridge and under the other. The *tsymbaly* are played with sticks called *paltsiatky* (12-16 cm. long).[7]

The *cymbalom* was popularized in Eastern Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries. A *tsymbaly* tradition existed in the Carpathians by the 17th century. At the end of the 1800's, *tsymbaly* were part of a strong musical tradition associated with ritual and social gatherings. This musical tradition

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[5] David Kettlewell, "Dulcimer, "*The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, 1980 ed.
[6] Paul Gifford, "The Developement [sic] of the Hammer Dulcimer, *Mugwumps Instrument Herald*, Sept. 1974, pp. 19-23.
[7] Stanisław Mierczyński, *Muzyka Huculszczyzny*, [Music of the Hutsul Region] (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1965), pp. 150-155.

was carried with Ukrainian immigrants into Western Canada, established itself in the 1890's, and has enjoyed a continuous tradition to the present day. This study focuses on *tsymbaly* making in East East Central Alberta today. It will be explored primarily through a *tsymbaly* maker and various contexts of his art, including the maker's craft and audience.

A. Review of Research in the Field

Information about *tsymbaly*, and *tsymbaly* craftsmen may occasionally be found in human interest stories in local papers, festival program notes, or local histories; but few scholarly works exist about *tsymbaly* in the North America.

Bruno Nettl, in *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology* states that ethnomusicology tends to concentrate on vocal music and analysis of song, often neglecting instruments and instrumental music.[9] *Tsymbaly* - making and playing in North America remains dynamically active although almost completely unstudied.[9] An exception is Barre Toelken's short description and analysis of an Oregon *tsymbaly* maker in *The Dynamics of Folklore*.[10]

Studies from three major related fields contribute to the understanding of the *tsymbaly* craft. Firstly, *tsymbaly*

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[9] Bruno Nettl, *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology* (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), p. 204.
[9] Robert B. Klymasz, "Folk Music," in *Visible Symbols: Cultural Expression Among Canada's Ukrainians*, ed. Manoly Lupul (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1984), p. 49.
[10] Barre Toelken, *The Dynamics of Folklore* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979), pp. 110-12.

are occasionally described in Ukrainian Canadian ethnography. A second related field is comprised of studies of folk music, instruments, and ethnography in Ukraine. The third related field is ethnomusicology. In this last category, dulcimers as well as musical instruments of other cultures are included.

A 1917 study by J.S. Woodsworth, *Ukrainian Rural Communities*, mentions *tsymbaly* among musical instruments of early immigrants.[11] Woodsworth documents early musical instruments in parts of East Central Alberta. However, the survey of musical instruments is haphazard, often incomplete, and uses questionable nomenclature.

At the forefront of Ukrainian Canadian folklore studies is the work of Robert Klymasz, whose doctoral dissertation, *Ukrainian Folklore in Canada* proffers the first comprehensive consideration of the processes at work in the Ukrainian immigrant complex in Western Canada.[12] In this and his other publications, Klymasz cites *tsymbaly* in his discussions of the wedding, Ukrainian Country Western Music, and festivals.[13] His contextual framework, wherein he

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[11] J.S. Woodsworth, *Ukrainian Rural Communities*, Bureau of Serial Research Report (Winnipeg: 1917), pp. 46, 86, et passim.

[12] Robert B. Klymasz, *Ukrainian Folklore in Canada: An Immigrant Complex in Transition*, Diss. Urbana 1971 (New York: Arno Press, 1980).

[13] Other works include Robert B. Klymasz, *Continuity and Change: The Ukrainian Folk Heritage in Canada* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1972); Robert B. Klymasz, "The Ethnic Folk Festival in North America Today," *Ukraintsi v Amerykans'komu ta kanads'komu suspil'stvakh*, ed. Wsevolod Isajiw (Jersey City: M.P. Kots Publishing, 1976), pp. 199-211; Robert B. Klymasz, "Sounds You Never Before Heard: Ukrainian Country Music in Western Canada."; and Robert B.

describes the dynamics of continuity and change is also relevant to the study of the *tsymbaly* phenomenom.

Among other studies that recognize the dynamics Ukrainian culture is the recently published *Visible Symbols: Cultural Expressions Among Canada's Ukrainians* based on the proceedings of a conference held at the University of Manitoba in 1981.[14] It is also in this spirit that "The Western Canadian Championships: Tsymbaly Competitions at the Red Barn" identifies the present popularity of *tsymbaly*.[15]

Many studies, due to their focus or lack of sensitivity to folk processes, are of little use in the examination of the *tsymbaly* phenomenom. Kenneth Peackock's, *A Survey of Ethnic Folkmusic Accross Western Canada* focuses on oral musical tradition in the Ukrainian commusity.[16] Philip Bassa's dissertation, "Ukrainian Musical Culture in Canada," completely fails to identify the active folk traditions or their processes in the Ukrainian immigrant complex in Western Canada.[17]

A second area of concern, *tsymbaly* in Ukraine, has been studied from various perspectives. Technical aspects of *tsymbaly* construction are provided by M.V. Lysenko in an

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[13](cont'd) Klymasz, "Folk Music."
[14] Manoly Lupul, ed., *Visible Symbols: Cultural Expressions Among Canada's Ukrainians* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1984).
[15] Mark Bandera, "The Western Canadian Championships: *Tsymbaly* Competitions at the Red Barn," *Canadian Folk Music Journal*, 11 (1983), pp. 28-33.
[16] Kenneth Peacock, *A Survey Of Ethnic Music Across Canada*. Anthropology Papers No. 5 (Ottawa: Dept. of Northern Affairs and Resources, 1963).
[17] Philip Bassa, "Ukrainian Musical Culture in Canada," diss. Montreal 1955.

interesting, though incomplete, description in *Narodni muzychni instrumenty*,[18] written in 1893. Stanisław Mierczyński, in *Muzyka Huculszczyzny* provides diagrams and descriptions of *tsymbaly* and their tunings based on materials gathered from 1937 to 1939.[19]

Contextual discussion of *tsymbaly* is furnished by Hnat KHotkevych in *Muzychni instrumenty ukrains'koho narodu*.[20] He traces the origins of *tsymbaly*, relates Ukrainian *tsymbaly* to those of neighboring nationalities, as well as documents the use of *tsymbaly* in ritual and ritual song. Similar descriptions can be found in ethnographic works which relate to ritual with which *tsymbaly* are associated, as for example, "Muzyka ukrains'koho vesillia," in *Vesil'ni pisni*.[21]

In "K izucheniiu ukrains'koi narodnoi instrumental'noi muzyki," Klyment Kvitka categorizes folk instruments according to the class of people who played them. *Tsymbaly* players belong in a professional category of musicians.[22] A

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[18] This was first published by M.V. Lysenko under a pseudonym, Boian, "Narodni muzychni instrumenty na Vkraini," [Folk Musical Instruments in Ukraine] *Zoria*, 1 (1894) 4-10. It was republished (with notes) under M. V. Lysenko, *Narodni muzychni instrumenty na Ukraini* [Folk Musical Instruments in Ukraine] (Kyiv: Mystetsvo, 1955).

[19] Mierczyński, 150-155.

[20] Hnat KHotkevych, *Muzychni instrumenty ukrains'koho narodu*, [Musical Instruments of the Ukrainian People] (KHarkiv: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1930), pp. 155-63.

[21] A.I. Ivanyts'kyi, "Muzyka ukrains'koho vesillia," ["Music of the Ukrainian wedding."] *Vesil'ni pisni*, ed. O.I. Dei (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1982), pp. 54-69.

[22] Klyment Kvitka, "K izucheniiu ukrainskoi narodnoi instrumental'noi muzyki," [Towards the Study of Ukrainian Folk Instrumental Music] in Vol. II of *Izbrannye trudy*, [Collected Works] ed. P.G. Bogatyrev (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1973), pp. 251-78.

professional Gypsy musical tradition existed in much of Europe, including Ukraine. Illustrations of Gypsy dulcimer traditions can be seen in Balint Sarosi's *Gypsy Music*.[23]

In *Hraie orkestr ukrains'kykh narodnykh instrumentiv* Victor Hutsal distinguishes between *mali* (small) or *hutsul's'ki* (Galician) *tsymbaly*, and *velyki kontsertovi* (large concert) *tsymbaly*.[24] Recent Soviet studies generally display a decided bias for modern concert instruments. A. Humeniuk in *Ukrains'ki narodni muzychni instrumenty*,[25] and O. Nezovybat'ko in *Ukrains'ki tsymbaly* and *SHkola hry na ukrain'kykh tsymbalakh*,[26] provide some historical backround, but define only concert *tsymbaly* as being representative of the present state of the folk art.[27]

Illustrations and descriptions of *tsymbaly* can also be found in catalogues. An example is the Museum of Ukrainian culture in Ivan CHabyniak's *Muzychni instrumenty*.[28]

In the West there is increasing awareness and publication regarding dulcimers. The Library of Congress has

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[23] Balint Sarosi, *Gypsy Music*, trans. Fred Macnicol (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1978).
[24] Victor Hutsal, *Hraie orkestr ukrains'kyh narodykh instrumentiv*, [The Ukrainian Folk Instrument Orchestra Plays] (Kyiv: Mystetsvo, 1978).
[25] A. Humeniuk, *Ukrains'ki narodni muzychni instrumenty* [Ukrainian Folk Musical Instruments] (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1967), pp. 105-12.
[26] O. Nezovybat'ko, *Ukrains'ki tsymbaly* [Ukrainian Tsymbaly] (Kyiv: Muzychna Ukraina, 1976); O. Nezovybat'ko, *SHkola hry na ukrains'kykh tsymbalakh* [School For Playing Ukrainian Tsymbaly] (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1966).
[27] See "Related Musical Traditions", Chapter 2.
[28] Ivan CHabyniak, *Muzychni instrumenty* [Musical Instruments] (Svydnyk: Muzei ukrains'koi kul'tury, 1972), pp. 45-47.

published *The Hammered Dulcimer and Related Instruments: A Bibliography.*[29] Unfortunately, none of the listed materials deal specifically with Ukrainian *tsymbaly*, and those representing North America concentrate almost exclusively on dulcimers descended from English variants.

An overview of hammer dulcimers around the world is provided by David Kettlewell's "Dulcimer" in *New Grove Dictionary of Music.*[30] He is also the author of "The Dulcimer and Related Instruments," an unpublished Ph.D. thesis.[31] John Leach provides another interesting overview in his article "The Psaltery and Dulcimer."[32]

A very good chapter on hammer dulcimer construction is contained in Paul Hacluck's *Violins and Other Stringed Instruments.*[33] Other sources concerned with construction include Philip Mason's *How to Build a Hammer Dulcimer*, Howard Mitchell's *The Hammered Dulcimer: How to Make and Play It*, and Sam Rizetta's, *Making a Hammer Dulcimer.*[34] Though not directly related to the *tsymbaly* instrument

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[29] Evan Stein, *The Hammered Dulcimer and Related Instruments: a Bibliography*, Archive of Folk Culture (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1979.

[30] Kettlewell, "Dulcimer."

[31] David Kettlewell, "The Dulcimer and Related Instruments", Diss. Loughborough, 1973.

[32] John Leach, "The Psaltery and Dulcimer," *The Consort*, No. 34 (1938) pp. 292-301.

[33] Paul Hackluck, *Violins and Other Stringed Instruments: How to Make Them* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1914), pp. 141-58.

[34] Philip Mason, *How to Build a Hammer Dulcimer* (Front Royal, Virginia: Blue Ridge Dulcimer Shop, 1977); Howard Mitchel, *The Hammered Dulcimer: How to Make and Play It* (Sharon, Connecticut: Folk Legacy Records FSI43, 1972) [Record and Book]; Sam Rizetta, *Making a Hammer Dulcimer* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1972), Leaflet 72-5.

building tradition, the aforementioned provide a good basis for comparison of the arts, specifically concerning technical aspects of construction.

Works of general interest concerning musical instruments include Geneviève Dournon's *Guide for the Collection of Traditional Musical Instruments*, Thomas Vennum Jr.'s, *The Ojibwa Dance Drum*, Anthony Jackson's article "Sound and Ritual", and Bruno Nettl's *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology*. Insight into the physics of the *tsymbaly* sound can be obtained in Robert Donington's *Music and Its Instruments*.[33]

B. Method

According to Bruno Nettl's discussions of ethnomusicology and specifically musical instruments, studies may focus on: (1) musical culture, (2) musical style, or (3) integration of musical style and culture.[34] This study will strive to deal with the first of these aspects, musical culture. *Tsymbaly* will be looked at as a material object of culture, and in its cultural context. The culture in which the *tsymbaly* phenomenom thrives can be

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[33] Geneviève Dournon, *Guide For the Collection of Musical Instruments*, Technical Handbook For Museums and Monuments No. 5 (Paris: Unesco Press, 1981); Thomas Vennum Jr., *The Ojibwa Dance Drum, Smithsonian Folklife Studies No. 3 (Washington, D.C.: 1982); Anthony Jackson, "Sound and Ritual," Man*, 3, No. 2 (1968) pp. 293-99; Nettl, *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology*; Robert Donongton, *Music and It's Instrument's* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1982).

[34] Bruno Nettl, *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology*, pp. 215-17.

interpreted as reflecting dynamic processes defined by the hemispheric school of folklore.[37]

Fieldwork provides the primary materials for this study. The most important element consists of recorded videotapes of a *tsymbaly* maker working at his craft. An attempt was made to note his art as closely as possible. In addition, tape recorded interviews were conducted with other craftsmen and players. During the interviews, various musical and extra-musical contexts of the *tsymbaly* were discussed. Where possible, this primary data was then compared with other sources.

In this study *tsymbaly* making in the area of East Central Alberta is discussed. Informants reside both in Edmonton, and east and northeast of the city in towns such as Tofield, Smoky Lake, Andrew, and Lamont.[38] However, even the city informants trace their roots to the countryside.

The cultural context of *tsymbaly* in Western Canada and specifically in the area of East Central Alberta is described in Chapter Two. The *tsymbaly* phenomenom actively reflects the processes of continuity and change in the immigrant complex.

In Chapter Three, a profile of Tom Chychul, a representative *tsymbaly* maker is presented. How he interprets and characterizes the modern state of his art is explored.

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[37] Richard M. Dorson, *Folklore and Folklife* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 43-45.

[38] See map, Figure 1.

The musical instrument as an object of material culture is described in Chapter Four. This is done by by describing the process of constructing a modern *tsymbaly*.

In Chapter Five, various esoteric and exoteric aspects of *tsymbaly* and the *tsymbaly* craftsmen are discussed. Interviews with the instrument makers and players, as well as published sources provide the basis for discussion.

The various dynamic characteristics of the *tsymbaly* making tradition are highlighted in the Conclusion. The adaptability and association of *tsymbaly* with old and new traditions insures continued survival. Two appendices, a glossary of *tsymbaly* making terms and a list of *tsymbaly* makers have been added as an aid for the reader.

II. The Use of *Tsymbaly* in East Central Alberta

Figure 2. Photograph of Ostashe
featuring troista muzyka. (Photo
Babichuk, Smoky Lake, Alberta)

Wedding, Wasel: 1933,
raph courtesy of John

The Use of *Tsymbaly* in East Central Alberta

The first Ukrainian immigrants to Canada to Western Canada came almost exclusively from Galician and Bukovynian areas of Austro-Hungary. They were peasants whose primary motivation for leaving the Old Country was economic deprivation caused by such factors as "overpopulation, subdivision of land holdings, heavy taxation, and unfavorable political conditions."[1] The Bukovynians were primarily Orthodox, while the Galicians were Greek Catholic.[2]

There have been three primary waves of Ukrainian immigration to Canada. Beginning in the 1890's, and over a period of almost 20 years, 170,000 Ukrainians immigrants entered Canada. The second, or interwar immigration saw aproximately 60,000 immigrants enter Canada.[3] In East Central Alberta, the two pre World War II immigrations centred their lives around agriculture, and their settlements were primarily distributed near railway lines needed to transport grain.[4]

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[1] As quoted by Vladimir J. Kaye, *Early Ukrainian Settlements in Canada, 1895-1900*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), p. 3.
[2] John-Paul Himka, "The Background to Immigration: Ukrainians of Galicia and Bukovyna, 1848-1914," in *A Heritage in Transition*, ed. Manoly R. Lupul (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1982), pp. 11-31.
[3] Vladimir J. Kaye and Frances Swyripa, "Settlement and Colonization," in *A Heritage in Transition*, ed. Manoly R. Lupul, pp. 32-33.
[4] See map, Figure 1.

With modernization, urbanization, and secularization of the community, today, less emphasis is placed on the regional distinctions of the Old Country. Common rural experience, language, customs, and culture, makeup the current Ukrainian community. It is the descendants of the pre World War II immigrants, whether still engaged in agricultural pursuits or now urbanized, who actively participate in the *tsymbaly* phenomenom.

During the third immigration, in the ten years following World War II, aproximately 36,000 Ukrainians entered Canada.[43] Unlike the first two waves, the third immigration was primarily politically motivated, and the immigrants represented all areas of Ukraine. This third immigration settled primarily in urban centres.

Today, Ukrainians descended from pre World War II immigrations tend to interpret their culture differently from their post World War II counterparts. The first group emphasizes synoptic primary symbols (represented by such items as embroidery, Easter Eggs, and food), which refer to universal and unique expressions of the culture's values. In contrast, the post World War II group emphasizes secondary symbols (such as the Poet Taras SHevchenko or the bandura[44]) which evoke memories of persecution and attempts to free the culture.[45] Isajiw states that:

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[43] Vladimir J. Kaye and Frances Swyripa, "Settlement and Colonization," pp. 32-33.

[44] The bandura is recognized by third wave Ukrainian immigrants as the representative national instrument; see "Related Musical Traditions," Chapter 2.

[45] Wsevolod W. Isajiw, "Symbols and Ukrainian Canadian

> Synoptic primary symbols [. . .] can be said to be strong symbols of ethnic identity than the descriptive secondary symbols because they implicitly contain more information about the group. Moreover, the kind of information contained provides a better link with the roots of the group, that is, its remote origins.[45]

The *tsymbaly* demonstrate the resiliency associated with synoptic primary symbols. The musical heritage of pre World War II immigrants (from Western regions of Ukraine) includes not only *tsymbaly*, but many other instruments including *sopilky* (various flutelike instruments), the *drymba* (jews'- or jaw's-harp), *duda* (bagpipe), and *trembita* (Ukrainian alpine horn).[47] None of these other instruments has enjoyed the popularity of *tsymbaly*, and most survive only in the memory of the community.[48]

Both *tsymbaly* mediums and the role of the instrument in music have changed in Canada. Why and how *tsymbaly* continue to address the needs and memory of their culture will be examined in this chapter. Dournon states that:

> We may also note that in the more or less rapid process of transformation or disappearance that affects traditional cultures, musical instruments and music frequently vanish last, as they draw from the very depths of the memory and needs of a

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[45](cont'd) Identity: Their Meaning and Significance," in *A Heritage in Transition*, ed. Manoly R. Lupul, pp. 119-28.
[46] Wsevolod W. Isajiw, "Symbols and Ukrainian Canadian Identity," p. 125.
[47] Humeniuk, Ukrains'ki narodni muzychni instrumenty; M. V. Lysenko *Narodni muzychni instrumenty na Ukraini*; Khotkevych.
[48] In taped interviews with John Babichuk, Smoky Lake, May-June 1984, other musical instruments heard about from his father and early years in the community were described. He knows of no one actively pursuing these other musical instrument traditions today. J.S. Woodsworth also documents early musical instruments in parts of East Central Alberta.

community.[49]

A. Mediums

To understand the social context of *tsymbaly* it is necessary to go back in time to the Old Country. Popular functions such as the wedding, [*vesillia*] or social gatherings [*besidy*] in Galician, Hutsulian, and Transcarpathian regions of Ukraine required music for dancing. *Troista muzyka*, musical folk ensembles usually featuring the violin, *tsymbaly* and drum (and sometimes *sopilky* or other instruments), were popular and considered obligatory at these functions.[50] This *troista muzyka* tradition was brought to Canada where it continued its popular association with ritual and social events, most notably the wedding.[51]

A 1933 wedding illustrates the tradition of the *troista muzyka* and *tsymbaly* in the wedding ritual.[52] Before noon, the musicians would meet at the bride's house, and escort her to the church. On the way, they would play the wedding marches, and ritual songs to which people sang. After the church wedding, the musicians would again play music on the way back to the brides house. Particularly important was the

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[49] Dournon, p. 9.
[50] M.V. Lysenko, *Narodni muzychni instrumenty na Ukraini*, p. 52; Ivanyts'kyi, p. 64.
[51] Klymasz, "Sounds you Never Before Heard," p. 377.
[52] Telephone interview with John Babichuk, September 1984; Also see the photograph, Figure 2, of Ostashek wedding in Wasel 1933. Metro Babichuk is playing *tsymbaly*. John Babichuk's father is the violinist. The drummer came later in the wedding.

wedding march as the bride entered the house. Music was also provided at dinner, and later for dancing inside a granery or on a platform built outside (weather permitting).

Today, Ukrainian Country Western bands featuring *tsymbaly* continue to entertain.[53] Orchestras such as the "Radomskys," "Prairie Pride," "Northern Troubadours," "Northern Kings," and "Starlights," are popular at weddings, anniversary celebrations, New Years celebrations [*malanky*], or any other functions that require good dancing music with a traditional Ukrainian flavour.

The *tsymbaly*'s context has further expanded beyond traditional events. The musical instrument is now a prime attraction at ethnic festivals in Dauphin, Manitoba, in Vegreville, Alberta, and in Vancouver, British Columbia.[54] In grandstand shows, *tsymbaly* find themselves freed from their traditional supportive role in bands, often appearing with other *tsymbaly* or alone as the main attraction.[55] On the festival grounds, builders often display and sell their *tsymbaly*.[56] Players and builders gather to try them out and socialize, while fans watch.

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[53] Ukrainian Country Western bands will be defined when discussing roles of *tsymbaly* in music.
[54] Klymasz "The Ethnic Folk Festival in North America Today," pp. 199-211.
[55] Slavko Nowytski, dir., *Reflections of the Past*, Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre, 1974.
[56] Tsymbaly maker Nick Supervich has displayed his *tsymbaly* at Dauphin Manitoba. Tom Chychul displays his *tsymbaly* yearly at the Vegreville festival. Both festivals feature *tsymbaly* competitions.

The *tsymbaly* competition is another new phenomenom which has evolved at the Dauphin, Manitoba, and Vegreville, Alberta festivals, or as the main attraction at the Red Barn. At the Red Barn competition,[57] characterized as the "Western Canadian Championships,"[58] old and young players get to meet and socialize. Today, prize money totals $1,500, and the audience exceeds 2,500 people.[59] Many in the audience are family and friends who cheer for their competitors, others are afficionados of the *tsymbaly* sound. During a competition there is a current of implicit and occassionally explicit affirmation and encouragement of continuity in tradition and identity.

> "And you know, ladies and gentlemen, when we see a little fellow like this, learning the art of *tsymbaly*, ah, it makes me feel so good. This means that your grandchildren fifty years from now will still be dancing to the sounds of Ukrainian *tsymbaly* at a Ukrainian wedding."[60]

One of the new ways the *tsymbaly* communicates to its audience is through recordings. Whereas previously *tsymbaly* were heard only at "events", now *tsymbaly* can be heard at any time on records, cassetes, and 8-track tapes.

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[57] The Red Barn is a popular country and western club in Bon Accord, Alberta.
[58] Taped interview with Steven Chwok, April 1983.
[59] Andrew Gregorovich, "Sweet Sound of Ukrainian Tsymbaly," *Forum*, No. 58 (1984), p. 32, reports that the Dauphin Manitoba festival offers $1,200 in prizes.
[60] On *Award Winning Dulcimer Sounds*, Heritage Records, HR 16, 1974; a recording of a competiton at the Red Barn. The master of ceremonies Dan Chomlak was praising a young competitor and the tradition.

A local record producer, Mr. Ken Huculak of "Heritage Records," has produced over 50 recordings. Of these, he estimates that at least 70 percent feature *tsymbaly*. There are various types of recordings. "Event" records reenact functions such as the CFCW *tsymbaly* competition or the ritual of a Ukrainian wedding. Other records promote "stars" and popular bands that have proven track records.

The popularity of *tsymbaly* on records is reflected by song titles such as "Duelling Dulcimers," "Dulcimer Polka," and "Dulcimer Delight."[1] Other records include *tsymbaly* in the record titles. These include *Award Winning Dulcimer Sounds*, *Dulcimer in Concert with Nick Mischi*, and *Dulcimer Sounds with the Northern Troubadors*.[2] Heritage records jingle, "If it's Heritage . . . It's Our's . . . It's Canadian," reflects pride in a ". . . new, distinctive, highly streamlined affirmation of ethnicity."[3]

Ken Huculak markets his records at the Ukrainian Bookstore, and other locations in Edmonton, surrounding towns, and western provinces; as well as festivals and competions. The owner of the Ukrainian Book Store in Edmonton estimates that Ukrainian country western music

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[1] "Duelling Dulcimers," *Ukrainian Dance Time with the Rhythm Kings*, Heritage, HR 27, 1977; "Dulcimer Polka," *Pete Gargus and the Swingsters*, Heritage, HR 31, 1979; Prairie Pride, "Dulcimer Delight," *Young Ukrainian Musicians*, Heritage, HR 38, 1983.

[2] *Award Winning Dulcimer Sounds*, Heritage Records, HR 16, 1974; *Dulcimer in Concert with Nick Mischi*, Heritage Records, Maple Haze, MH 7662, 1977; *Northern Troubadours, Dulcimer Sounds*, Heritage Records, HR 39, 1983.

[3] Telephone interview with Ken Huculak, May 1984; Ron Chalmers, "Ukrainian Music Takes on Pop Beat," *Edmonton Journal*, 9 July, 1984. Sec. B, p. 8.

outsells "pop" Ukrainian music at least 3 or 4 to 1 in their store.[‘‘] One critic of Ukrainian popular music puts the numbers at least 5 to 1.[‘‘]

The *tsymbaly* recordings are used in another "new" medium, radio. CFCW, a Camrose Alberta based country radio station airs a daily Ukrainian hour presently hosted by Mr. R. Tompkins, and heard from 8:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. The program was started by popular announcer Dan Chomlak in 1959. It has drawn up to 12,800 listeners per night, or about 40,000 in the six nights a week it airs. This radio station regularly plays music featuring *tsymbaly*. As well, local bands, records, and events associated with *tsymbaly* are also plugged.

> I am . . . promoting their various activities, be it the Dauphin or Vegreville Festivals or a local church *praznyk* . . . I've been promoting at least a dozen things per week and this has been going on for years.‘‘

CFCW has sponsored the annual *tsymbaly* competition (now held at the Red Barn just north of Bon Accord, Alberta) for over 10 years.

All the aforementioned mediums: weddings and dances, recordings, and radio programs, provide the context and audience for the *tsymbaly*, and by extension *tsymbaly* players

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‘‘ Telephone interview with Mr. Melnychuk, May 1984.
‘‘ Bohdan Zajcew, "Ukrainian Popular Music in Canada," in *Visible Symbols*, p. 60.
‘‘ Andrij Makuch, "A Ukrainian Wolfman Jack," *Student*, August, 1978, p. 9.

and builders. Cultural and spiritual values of the community are conveyed through musical tradition that preserves continuity and renews through change.'' The different genres are not mutually exclusive, but rather are strongly linked to one another. In the process, *tsymbaly* are actively promoted.

B. Roles in Music

Both tradition and adaptation are important factors in characterizing the *tsymbaly*'s roles in music.

The *tsymbaly* sound is significant to the community particularly as regards ritual.

> Ritual provides a frame and a marked off time or place that alerts a special kind of expectancy. Of all physical stimuli, sound is an ideal marker. . . .''

As a musical instrument, *tsymbaly* enjoy characteristics of both the violin and drums. The *tsymbaly* produces melody, as well as percussive sounds which make them effective producers of rhythm; rhythm changes being more important than melody changes in denoting changes of mood.'' This psychological effect of *tsymbaly* has been noted in folk song.

"Koby skrypky, tsymbaly

'' Dournon, p. 5.
'' Jackson, p. 296.
'' Jackson, p. 297, states that ". . . external rhythmic stimulation affects the natural brain rhythms, thus giving rise in certain cases, to abnormal psychological states."

To b i-nizhky skakaly."
[If there were a violin and *tsymbaly*,
The feet would hop.]

"Oi zahraite tsymbaly
SHchob nizhechky dryzhaly."
[Play the *tsymbaly*,
So the feet might tremble.]'°

In *troista muzyka*, the *tsymbaly* were a secondary instrument. One might be hard pressed to find the original *troista muzyka* today, however, it is possible to trace its evolution. One of the oldest bands of the prairies is the Radomsky Orchestra. Metro Radomsky is a violinist. His first group (over 60 years ago) consisted of a violin, *tsymbaly*, and drum. Over the years, saxophones, accordions, trumpets were added in various combinations, as well as electric amplification. The original instruments (violin, *tsymbaly*, and drums) still provide the core for the group.''

His band today, represents a link between the original *troista muzyka* tradition, and modern Ukrainian country western music. It is a reflection of the dynamic process of continuity and change through which the *tsymbaly* tradition has survived. Proof of the Radomsky's popularity lies in his busy schedule. They play three times a week, and is booked many months in advance for weddings and other functions requiring music for dancing.

'° M.V. Lysenko, *Narodni muzychni instrumenty na Ukraini*, p. 52; KHotkevych p. 160.
'' Taped interview with Metro Radomsky, July 1984; "Metro Radomsky: Orchestra Leader of Ukrainian Country Music," *Forum*, No. 47 (1981), pp. 8-10.

The saying, "*skrypka vede*" [The violin leads] established the fact that traditionally, the violin was the main instrument in the ensemble.[72] In the New World, violins quickly and cheaply became available.[73] As well, the violin was heard in contexts from outside the community's musical culture. As the violin became more common, it lost distinction as a cultural marker. The violin is no longer a unique visible and auditory symbol of community identity.

Unlike the violin, the *tsymbaly* could not be readily bought or heard outside the Ukrainian community. To this day, the *tsymbaly* lends "a distinctive Old Country sound to any folk music item that is especially obligatory in the performance of Ukrainian wedding music."[74] Over time, *tsymbaly* have been identified as a cultural marker of Ukrainian people in rural Western Canada. In the orchestra "Prairie Pride," it is the *tsymbaly* player and the *tsymbaly* that lead the ensemble.[75] The musical instrument has managed to alter its role significantly in the orchestra as well as increase its visibility in the musical life of the community.

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[72] In personal interviews, Metro Radomsky, July 1984, and Nick Mischi, July 1984, echoed this quote. Radomsky is a violinist who has led an orchestra for 62 years. Mischi has played *tsymbaly* for 72 years.

[73] *Tsymbaly* makers John Babichuk and Tom Chychul each own "Stradivarius" violins, made in Czechoslovakia, which were once sold by the thousands on the prairies.

[74] Klymasz, "Sounds You Never Before Heard," p. 377.

[75] Prairie Pride, *Young Ukrainian Musicians*, Heritage Records, HR 38, 1983, features *tsymbaly* player Steven Chwok.

The changing role of the *tsymbaly* in the orchestra can also be expressed in musical terms.'[16] There is a marked contrast between the musical styles of Mr. Nick Mischi, who learned to play in the Old Country; and Mr. Steven Chwok, a popular young player.'[17]

Mischi integrates vertical as well as horizontal musical textures into his playing. He produces a harmonic and rhythmic blend suitable for supporting the traditional "lead" of the violin, and the rhythm of the drum.

As more instruments have been added to the orchestra, the need for *tsymbaly* to fill in harmony as a secondary instrument has perhaps been diminished. In the *tsymbaly*'s new role as "lead" instrument, there is a greater emphasis on the homophonic, horizontal, melodic musical line. A player such as Chwok concentrates on melody, rhythm, and speed more than intricate harmonies in his musical expression. As the Ukrainian language is forgotten by succeeding generations, the *tsymbaly*'s non-verbal instrumental nature offers a unique way of communicating culture and identity.'[18]

'[16] Leon Dallin, *Listeners Guide to Musical Understanding*, 4th ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 1977), pp. 116-17.

'[17] Nick Mischi provided the initial characterization of old and new styles. He was one of three judges at the 1984 CFCW *tsymbaly* competition. Mischi can be heard on Marangos, *Authentic Ukrainian Music and Song*, with Nick Mischi, Heritage Records, HR 36 1982. Steven Chwok won the 1984 CFCW *tsymbaly* competion. He can be heard on Prairie Pride, *Young Ukrainian Musicians*, Heritage Records, HR 38, 1983.

'[18] Klymasz, "Ukrainian Country Music," p. 378.

C. Related Musical Traditions

It is important to note that in Western Canada, there has developed a *tsymbaly* tradition largely independent of other related musical trends. These other trends include (1) present Soviet tendencies, (2) the Post World War II Ukrainian immigration to Canada, and (3) the hammer dulcimer tradition in North America.

Present day Soviet Ukrainian folklore places emphasis on the "classical" capabilities of concert *tsymbaly*. Soviet scholarship claims that *"Kontsertovi tsymbaly - tekhnichno doskonalyi suchasnyi ukrains'kyi narodnyi instrument."*[77] [The concert tsymbaly is a technically advanced modern Ukrainian folk instrument.]

This approach may divorce the *tsymbaly* from its former traditional contexts.[80] The repertoire of the Soviet *tsymbaly* player is likely to stress works by Soviet composers: instrumental solo's, songs of the proletariat, choir pieces, segments of oratorios and cantatas.[81] In contrast, the *tsymbaly* phenomenon of Western Canada has evolved spontaneously, rather than from conscious manipulation, as in the Soviet Union.

Post World War II Ukrainian immigrants to Canada generally represent a different mind set as compared to

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[77] Mykhailo Lysenko, "Tsymbaly," *Narodna tvorchist' ta etnohrafiia*, No. 5 (1968), p. 54.
[80] Robert B. Klymasz, "Folklore Politics in the Soviet Ukraine," in *Folklore Nationalism and Politics*, ed. Felix J. Oinas (Columbus: Slavica Publishers, 1978) pp. 97-108.
[81] Nezovybat'ko, *Ukrains'ki tsymbaly*, pp. 48-55.

first immigration Ukrainians. Post World War II immigrants primarily in cities and were often uninformed about the established Ukrainian Canadian culture on the prairies. A 1979 concert program from Vancouver suggests that the *tsymbaly* were:

> . . . a favourite instrument of many of Canada's early Ukrainian settlers. Today, however, the only stringed instrument still actively being utilized in the Ukrainian community is the bandura.[82]

Similar sentiments about the demise of *tsymbaly* prevail in a recent article concerning a *tsymbaly* competition in Dauphin, Manitoba.

> . . this part of the Ukrainian musical heritage [*tsymbaly* playing] is now in peril of gradually disappearing. Perhaps the tremendously successful bandura groups could provide some assistance in helping to organize and establishing again the sweet music of the *tsymbaly* of Ukraine.[83]

Contrary to the above sentiment, the *tsymbaly* are not in imminent danger of disappearing in Western Canada. The tradition continues with decendants of the first immigrants.

The *tsymbaly* phenomenom has also had few direct contacts with the hammer dulcimer tradition in North America. This may be partially due to the wane of dulcimer's popularity in North America at the beginning of the century. Had hammer dulcimers been readily availabe (as was the case with the violin) the distinctive role of *tsymbaly*, as a cultural marker, as well as the craft's tradition may not

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[82] *Ukrainian Festival '79*, Queen Elizabeth Theatre Program (Vancouver: Ukrainian Canadian Committee, 13, May 1979), n.p.

[83] Gregorovich, p. 32.

have evolved.

This is not to say that present day practitioners of the *tsymbaly* art are not aware of the North American hammer dulcimer. Several craftsmen have investigated hammer dulcimers through available literature.[‡‡] Still, the *tsymbaly* tradition remains minimally influenced. None of the informants in this study has actually seen or heard other North American dulcimers first hand. Likewise, a survey of literature in North America suggests that the hammer dulcimer tradition is relatively oblivious to the *tsymbaly* phenomenon in Western Canada.[§§]

[‡‡] Two *tsymbaly* makers, Nick Supervich and Tom Chychul have sent for Sam Rizetta, *Hammer Dulcimer History and Playing* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Leaflet 72-4); Rizetta, *Making a Hammer Dulcimer*; Mason, *How to Build a Dulcimer*; and Mason, *The Hammered Dulcimer Instruction Book*, (Washington, D.C.: Communications Press, 1977. In a personal interview with Nick Supervich, fall 1983, he claimed that the *tsymbaly* tradition is technically ahead of its North American cousins. Chychul learned of Mason's works from a Paul Budniak, and later lent them to Supervich. Supervich probably learned of the Smithsonian publications through one of the bibliographies, which mentions the availability of the Rizetta publications free of charge.

[§§] Evan Stein, pp. 1-5.

III. Profile of a *Tsymbaly* Maker

Figure 3. Photograph of To
at the Vegreville Pysanka F
(Photograph by Mark Bandera

Chychul marketing tsymbaly
stival, July 1984

Profile of a *Tsymbaly* Maker

The *tsymbaly* craftsman is a critical participant in the changing *tsymbaly* tradition. The finished *tsymbaly*'s musical and extra musical characteristics depend on the maker's memory of the tradition, as well as individual tastes and interpretations.[1] The maker also is responsible for introducing the musical instrument into the community. The audience he caters to includes fans of Ukrainian country-western music, players, other craftsmen, and of course himself.

Tom Chychul, age 63, has built 75 *tsymbaly* to date, and provides a representative profile of the *tsymbaly* craftsman in East Central Alberta.[2] Chychul was not brought up making *tsymbaly*. He is now a farmer working 78 acres just north of Tofield, Alberta, 60 miles east of the city of Edmonton. In the past he has worked as a mechanic, as a woodworker, and in a packing plant. He occasionally fixes farm machinery for neighbors, and is very talented with his hands.

When asked why he makes *tsymbaly*, Chychul says that in 1968 Eatons department store had 6 electric saws for sale at the bargain price of $169.50. He bought one, and in 1969 it

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[1] Toelken, p. 111.

[2] Six videotaped interviews held with Tom Chychul, July 1984; Personal interviews with Tom Chychul at the Vegreville "Pysanka" Festival, July 1983-84; A Personal interview with Tom Chychul, April 1984; Toelken, pp. 110-112, provides a description of a *tsymbaly* maker whose profile is similar to Chychul's.

came to mind that he could try producing the musical instrument. However, this answer doesn't address the crux of the question. It only suggests that he had the means at his disposal.

A. Tradition

Clues to the real reasons Chychul makes *tsymbaly* are provided by his backround. He is very proud of the musical tradition in his family. Mr. Chychul points out that on the back of a 1966 recording is written that in ". . . Chychuls family music dates back many, many years."[8] Tom Chychul's father also played the *tsymbaly*.[9] His brother played *tsymbaly* with the Northern Troubadour band on a set of "Zelisko *tsymbaly*".[10] The Northern Troubadours have also recorded the "Chychul Polka".[11]

Chychul remembers that his father's uncle used to build *tsymbaly*. (These *tsymbaly* were slightly larger than the standard in Western Canada today).[12] He is positive that his father's uncle learned the craft in the Old Country.

The first time Tom Chychul saw *tsymbaly* was at a wedding in 1927 when he was six years old. He remembers a *tsymbaly* player playing the wedding march. That night, while sleeping in his father's cousin's attic, a cat walked over

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[8] *Northern Troubadours*, QC 483, 1966.
[9] Tom Chychul's father is from Sniatyn, in the Hutsul (*Pokuttia*) region of Ukraine.
[10] See "'It All Started in Andrew'," Chapter 5, for a discussion of the significant *tsymbaly* maker, John Zelisko.
[11] "Chychul Polka," Northern Troubadours, Heritage Records, HR 32.
[12] See "Old vs. New", Chapter 5.

the *tsymbaly*, scaring Mr. Chychul.''[3]

Chychul looks at his art as continuing a family tradition, but he is also aware of the origins of the tradition. He tells his audience that *tsymbaly* are a very old instrument, dating back at least seven or eight hundred years ago, in Ukraine.''[4] He knows that other cultures have dulcimers, and from watching a television show, says that "*Chainameny* have 'Suzuki' *tsymbaly*." [The Chinese have Suzuki *tsymbaly*].''[5]

From, his childhood, socializing with other builders and players, and reading, he knows that the *tsymbaly* art was originally a gypsy tradition,''[6] and that *tsymbaly* were made differently than today. The pegs were made of wood, without threads, and hammered into the wood. Strings were made of gut. Pieces of wood were cut with an axe. No nails were used, and the *tsymbaly* were not decorated the way he decorates them today.

'' "CHolovik bez strakhu i upyr," [The Man Without Fear and the Vampire] *A Reader in Ukrainian Folklore*, Bohdan Medwidsky, comp. (Edmonton: University of Alberta 1979), pp. 2-6, tells a comparable story, of a fearless man who is frightened to death by the sound of *tsymbaly*.

'' Humeniuk, *Ukrains'ki narodni muzychni instrumenty*, p. 106-7, says *tsymbaly* may have existed as early as the 12th century in Ukraine and popularized about the 15th century.

'' In this humorous characterization, Chychul consciously defined another culture's dulcimers using the Ukrainian term, "*tsymbaly*."

'' Béla Bartók, *Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), p. 62, in an essay written in 1924 states that the musical instrument ". . ." became localized in Hungary and neighboring districts during the last 200-300 years," and until recently . . . "was used exclusively by gipsies [sic];" Bálint Sárosi, plates 13-22, illustrates the gypsy tradition.

Chychul recounts that when he first started making *tsymbaly*, he used an axe to plane the top board. He feels confident that if called upon, he could make *tsymbaly* in the old traditional ways.

B. The Player

Tom Chychul also plays the *tsymbaly*. Not all builders in the area can also play. Chychul owns five trophys won for his talents. The first one was given to him eight years ago at a variety show at the Beverly League in Edmonton. In 1978, at the CFCW *tsymbaly* competition, the popular master of ceremonies of "The Ukrainian Hour", Dan Chomlak gave him a special trophy "*tomu shcho hrav na svoikh tsymbalakh.*" [Because he played on the *tsymbaly* he made himself]. In 1979 at the CFCW competition, he won another award for the same reason. Finally, in June, 1984, he won an amateur night competition at the Lavoy Hotel.

Chychul practices by taping songs he likes from CFCW's "Ukrainian Hour", and playing along with them. As he plays, his foot keeps time. His dog, "Hippy", should he be in the area, invariably joins in singing. For Mr. Chychul, being able to play reflects his musical tradition. As well, it is an important dimension of himself as a complete maker.''

'' As will be seen, Chychul uses his playing skills to help sell *tsymbaly*.

C. The Craftsman

Most of the *tsymbaly* making process is a solitary activity. An exception is the gathering of materials. Chychul buys strings from Bill Lutyck in Willingdon, bicycle spokes from Georges Bicycle Shop in Edmonton, pins from The Ukrainian Book Store, and wood from Prudham's in Edmonton. He used to buy from Clark's Lumber Yard, where "everyone" knew him."[1] Going for supplies gives Chychul the opportunity to socialize, go into town, and visit friends.

Chychul makes *tsymbaly* in a garage on his farm. He enjoys putting in long hours on his craft. Often times, his wife brings him meals to the garage so that his work is not interrupted. Usually, the radio plays in the background, often CFCW's "Ukrainian Hour". *"Z muzykoiu nailipshe robyty"* [One works best with music]. In winter the garage is heated with a woodburning stove.

The garage could be described as neatly cluttered. Rough wood is stacked just inside the garage door. Further down, various forms and jigs hang off the wall. At the end stands an electric table saw which also acts as the work bench on which most of the *tsymbaly* building is done. To the side lies a long work bench, filled with most of his tools and supplies. Above, in the rafters, more wood, forms, and an old set of *tsymbaly* bought 43 years ago."[2]

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[1] Clark's Lumber Yard has since gone out of business.
[2] Chychul bought the *tsymbaly* in Edmonton. He believes they were made 3 years earlier, but does not remember the maker's name. Chychul has partially rebuilt the *tsymbaly*.

Tom Chychul judges his *tsymbaly* by refering to an inherited system of culture-based knowledge, as well as his own sense of aesthetics and invention.'[00]

Chychul has invented processes and forms to make the work efficient. These range from patterns of various pieces, to jigs for drilling entire rows at one time. He proudly calls his inventions "*mii patént*" [My patent]. Efficiency is also seen in the fact that he often works on more than one *tsymbaly* at a time.

As Chychul has become more proficient, his designs have become bolder. Early *tsymbaly* showed little or no ornamentation. Five years ago, experimenting with various patterns and colours of reflective decals, "*aby faino blyshchilo*" [that it might glitter nicely] under lights on stage.

Practical design considerations are investigated by modifying placements of support bridges [*pidpory*], raising or lowering the top bridges [*konyky*], or changing the type of wood used or its thickness. He is curious to investigate how changes might affect the sound and structural integrity of the musical instrument, and how he might improve them.

Chychul first learned to make *tsymbaly* from Harry Pidladsky, a hotel operator in Chipman, Alberta. Also, he copied designs of other *tsymbaly* builders, most notably John Zelisko of Andrew, Alberta.'[01]

'[00] Toelken, pp. 110-12, depicts a *tsymbaly* maker who is isolated from a *tsymbaly* making tradition and relies on memory.

'[01] See "'It all Started in Andrew'," Chapter 5.

Once he learned to make *tsymbaly*, he found himself part of a loose-knit community of *tsymbaly* craftsmen in the area. He enjoys the social interactionwithin this group; comparing knowledge, trading secrets, and competing. His favourite craftsman is Nick Supervich, and they often spend time together.[102]

As an established *tsymbaly* maker, Chychul continues the tradition by passing on his expertise to others. He tells the story of one unnamed beginning *tsymbaly* maker who could not understand why the *tsymbaly* would not tune. Chychul showed him where to place the top bridges in order to alleviate the problem.

Bill Kolody is an 80-year-old *tsymbaly* maker from Willingdon. Chychul is helping him by lending forms and offering his knowledge. Chychul remembers that his own first *tsymbaly* were not very successful. Helping beginning makers reminds Chychul of his own initial attempts, and reinforces his present status as a master craftsman.[103]

D. Sayings

Chychul knows many traditional sayings which help define his *tsymbaly* making.

While working, Mr. Chychul regularly leaves a margin of error in his work that necessitates much trimming, filing,

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[102] Nick Supervich, of Edmonton, is a master carpenter. His skill is reflected in construction of *tsymbaly*. Chychul counter's that Supervich doesn't play.
[103] Chychul complains of a few other makers who refuse to part with secrets.

and cutting. He explains the reason for his method with this saying: "*Miryv, miryv, miryv, - i shche za korotko.*" [I measured, measured, measured, and it's still too short]. Once a piece is cut too short, it can't be made longer; but if a piece is a bit long, it may still be shortened.

Care taken before and during the fitting of of two pieces together, is explained this way: "*Treba desiat raz miryty, raz pylyty, - abo raz miryty, desiat raz pylyty.*" [One must measure ten times and file once, or measure once and file ten times].

Much of the finishing work is time consuming and repetitive, involving a great deal of trimming, filing, and sanding. A blacksmith's saying was used while sanding a piece of work. "*Hriv, hriv zelizo, zrobylos' z toho pich i bil'she nicho*" [Iron was heated, heated, until the forge was left and nothing else]. He realizes that at some point, one must finish and go ahead to the next step.

He wryly remarks that "*KHlop na starosti hraiet'sia z tsymbalamy*" [A fellow in his old age is playing with *tsymbaly*]. Though proud of his work, he keeps his art in perspective, and isn't above joking about himself. In a similar context, he says: "*CHasom zlostyt*" [Sometimes it frustrates].

His *tsymbaly* don't always work:

> CHasom ne vdast'. To tak . . . Z tsymbalamy iak ta rizchyna . . . na khlib z toi samoi muky. Odna rizchyna bula dobra, a druha ne bula dobra. IA raz buduvav try sety [tsymbaliv] na raz, i ne bulo shchoby bulo dva sety shchoby buv odyn holos. Kozhen mav inakshyi holos.
>
> [Sometimes it does not succeed. With *tsymbaly* it is as with leavened dough for bread from the same flour. One leavened dough was good and the other wasn't. I once built three sets of *tsymbaly* at once, and no two sets sounded alike. Each had a different sound.]

Confident of himself as a good *tsymbaly* maker, Chychul still understands that his own skills are not always sufficient to guarantee a uniformly successful outcome.

Displaying defective tuning pegs, Chychul remarked, "*SHCHo take psy idiat', a shcho dobre liudy.*" [Dogs eat things like this, but people eat good things] His expertise allows him to judge the materials needed in his craft.

Tom Chychul's sayings reflect time-proven and pragmatic philosophy. Both humorous and practical, the sayings suggest means of coping with both positive and negative aspects of *tsymbaly* making.

E. The Salesman

Chychul is a master seller. As he is well known in the area for his craft, much of his selling involves word of mouth advertizing. In July 1984, Chychul sold an instrument to a Norwegian lady from Milhurst, Saskatchewan for $500. This lady and her husband had been attending Ukrainian dances, liked the music, and wanted to acquire one of the

tsymbaly. They first looked for one in Edmonton, finally heard about Mr. Chychul by word of mouth, visited him, and bought one.

When a buyer comes to him, Chychul works like a car salesman.[**] One at a time, he takes out a *tsymbaly* commenting on styling and sound. While he demonstrates a tune, he asks for the buyers opinion "*kotryi holos lipshyi*?" [Which has a better sound], "*iak faino blyshchyt'*" [How nicely it shines]. In doing so, he brings buyers attention to the attributes of each model.

Mr Chychul also sells at events. At the Vegreville Festival, Chychul is a yearly participant. He sits in the middle of the pavillion, four or five sets displayed around him, playing *tsymbaly* (amplified with a pickup). Occasionally, young competitors from the *tsymbaly* competition, or older players drop by to talk and try them. People passing by stop and listen. Friends and other builders pause to chat. He also takes his *tsymbaly* to auctions, competitions, and concerts.

When a beginner wants to buy a set, he provides a tuning scheme that fits under the strings and shows the player the notes.[**] In addition, he has written out songs, (indicating left side, right side, or base strings and the notes) in order to make it easier to play.

[**] Chychul agreed with this characterization.
[**] See the photograph, Figure 3.

Figure 4. Notation for a "Wedding March," devised by Tom Chychul (See "Tuning," Chapter 5, for more explanation of the tuning system.)

Chychul willingly barters with prospective buyers. Often, his asking price of $500 to $1,000 can be talked down. When asked how much a particular newly made instrument would cost, Chychul answered, "*O, za tykh mozhe tysiachu, mozhe menshe; zalezhyt' khto kupuie, skil'ky budemo torhuvaty*." [Oh, for this maybe a thousand, maybe less; it depends who buys, how much we'll bargain]. In addition, he will take almost anything in trade. For people he knows, he will even arrange an installment plan. Cash is always preferred.

Examples of some of his deals include a set he was selling for $350. He sold it for $300 and an old *tsymbaly* in trade. The old *tsymbaly* was subsequently resold for $100 for an extra $50 profit. (Another old set of *tsymbaly* was taken

in trade allowing $250 and resold for a hundred dollars less.) He has also allowed an accordion in trade and was once offered a horse, but decided he didn't need it.

For his best trade, Chychul went to Frontier Chrysler in Vegreville in 1982. There, he bought a 1979 Ford F1 50 red pickup truck priced at $3,500. Chychul got it for 3 *tsymbaly* and $500. He has since driven 40,000 kilometres with the truck. (The dealer wanted one *tsymbaly* for his father, one for himself and one to sell.)

Tom Chychul is a businessman. When at the Vegreville festival, someone yelled, "*Hrai, abo hroshi viddai!*" [Play or give back the money],'[**] he retorted, "*SHche nikhto ne dav!*" [Nobody has given any yet]. Mr. Chychul is keen to bargain and barter, but somewhat resentful of people who want something for nothing. He prices his *tsymbaly* at what he thinks his *tsymbaly* are worth and what he thinks the market will bear. He realizes that other builders charge more, for *tsymbaly*, but money is not his only consideration.

When asked if he spent so much time and care while making *tsymbaly* because customers demanded it, he said no. Customers are interested more in the sound. He says he makes them, "*Bo ia khochu aby mene khvalyly shcho dobri tsymbaly robliu.* [Because I want to be praised for making good *tsymbaly*] Much of Mr. Chychul's craft can be characterized by pride in tradition and pride in himself.

[**] This common proverb reflected the tradition of throwing money into the instrument as a means of payment for a musicians services.

IV. Constructing *Tsymbaly*

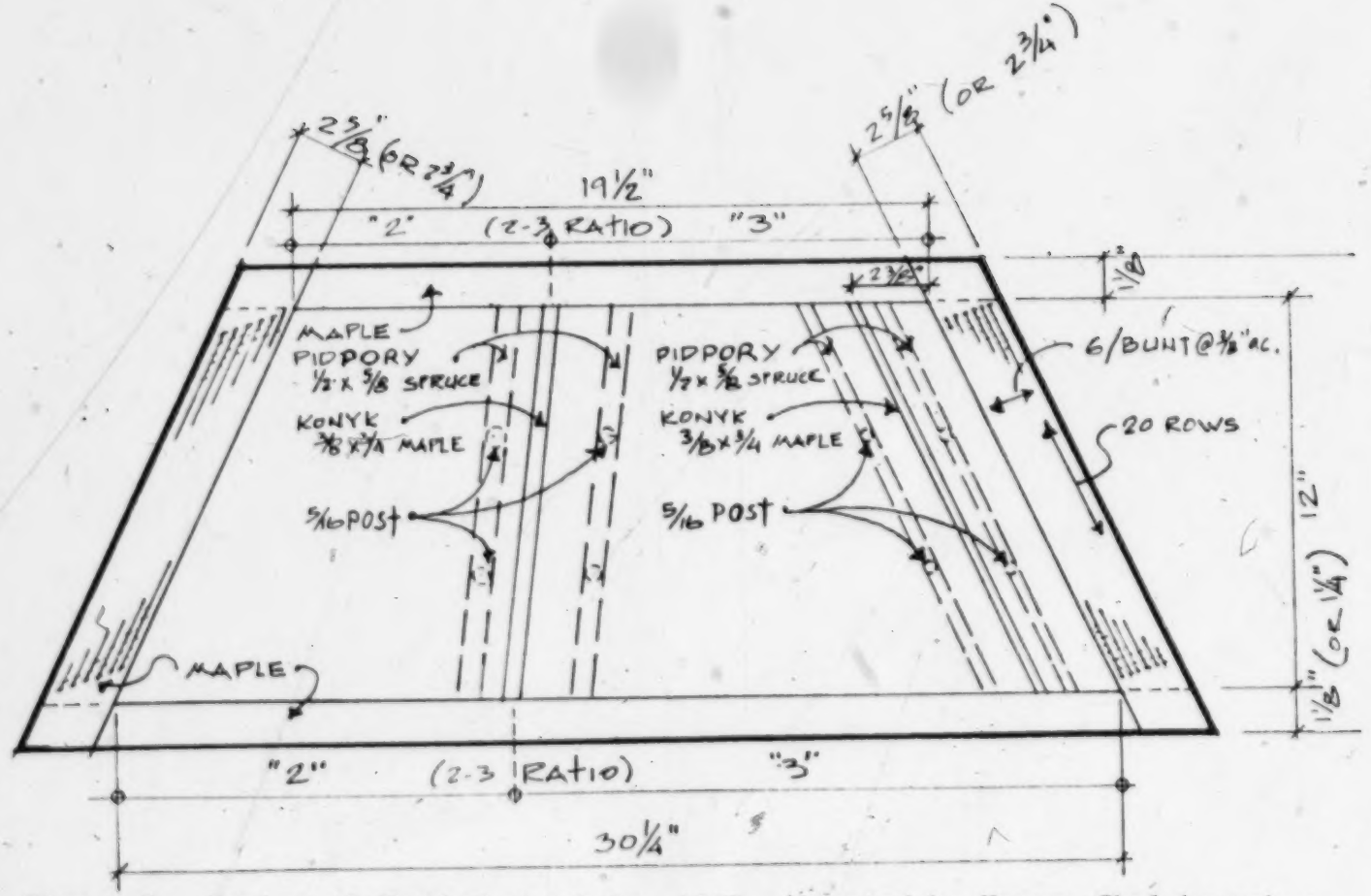

Figure 5. Design of Chychul tsymbaly, 1979. (Adapted by Yarema Shulakewych, Edmonton: Omni Design Ltd., September 1984).

Constructing *Tsymbaly*

Mr. Tom Chychul was filmed making *tsymbaly*, on six days over a period of two weeks, in July 1984. The steps used by Chychul to produce an instrument are recounted here. An attempt has been made to keep the steps in sequence. For clarity, each main step is kept together, although in actual fact, some steps may have overlapped when Chychul was working. Alterations in sequence is noted as the steps are explained.

Constructing *tsymbaly* involves: making a skeleton frame, preparing a bottom board, covering the skeleton frame with a maple facing, inserting dowels into the front of the frame into the sideblocks, making supporting bridges, painting, adding ornamentaion, preparing the side blocks for pegs and pins, making top bridges, and preparing a top board, making sound holes, fitting the top board, making playing sticks, stringing the instrument, tuning, and making a tuning key.

Basic materials include: wood, nails, glue, wire, bicycle spokes, pegs, paint, and acrylic finish. Wood, consisting of rough maple, oak, and sitka spruce, as well as cedar siding and birch plywood is bought at Prudham Building Supply in Edmonton. Nails are 3/4 inch and 1 1/2 inch finishing nails. Elmer's carpenter's's glue is the prefered glue. Wire is bought from Bill Lutyck in Willingdon. Bicycle

spokes are found at George's Bicycle Shop in Edmonton. Pegs may also be obtained from Bill Lutyck. Paint and acrylic finish are of the spray can variety.

Chychul uses an array of electric and hand tools. Electric tools include: a table saw, drill press, hand held drills, a planer, saber saw, grindstone, and sanders. Manual tools include a crosscut saw, hacksaw, drill, hammer, chisel, files, sanders, clamps, and pliers.

A. Skeleton Frame

The skeleton frame, on which most of the strength of the musical instrument depends, consists of four basic pieces. There are two side blocks [*kovbany*] on which pins and pegs will rest, a front board [*perednia doshka*], and a longer parallel back board [*zadnia doshka*].

The side blocks require the most work, and are prepared first. A rough piece of maple is cut on the electric table saw into two pieces approximately 16 inches long and 4 inches high by 3 1/2 inches wide.

The 4 inch sides are cut at a 20° angle (from horizontal). The new side measures approximately 2 7/8 inches.

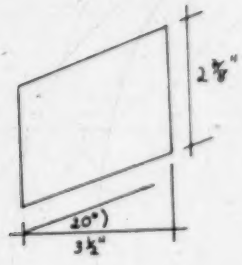

Figure 6. Side block for the skeleton frame (Step 1, end view)

The ends of the side blocks are then measured and cut down to 30° from vertical. The resultant long sides are reduced to 13 1/2 inches.

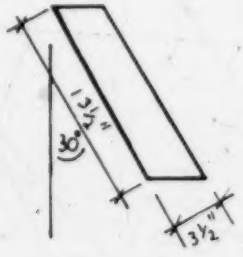

Figure 7. Side block for the skeleton frame (Step 2, length view)

A piece of wood, already angled at 70° is used at the

table saw to hold the side block steady, and cut at a 90° angle.

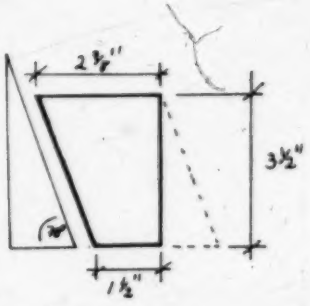

Figure 8. Side block for the skeleton frame (Step 3, end view)

On the bottom of the side block, a cut 2 1/2 inches wide and 1/4 inch deep is made with the table saw. This is then trimmed with a cross cut saw. The result is a lip against which the bottom board will eventually rest. This space is temporarily filled with a 1/4 inch board (nailed with two 3/4 inch finishing nails) designed to keep the bottom piece flush while working.

Joints [*zamky* lit. locks] must be made on each end of both side blocks for fitting the front and back boards. These are cut 1/2 inch from the bottom of the block, 3/4 inch wide, and 1 1/8 inches (or 1 1/4 inches) deep using a gato blade.

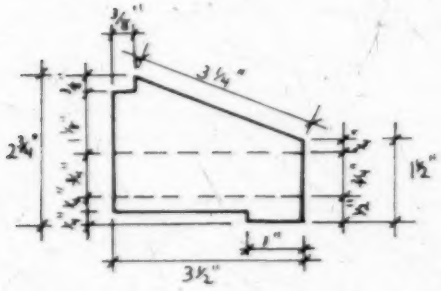

Figure 9. Side block for the skeleton frame (Step 4, end view)

The front board [*perednia doshka*] and back board [*zadnia doshka*] are made of oak. They begin as two pieces 40 inches long, are cut to a height of 2 3/4 inches, and a width of 1 1/8 inches.'[9]' In addition, the boards used for the front and back are cut to show a vertical grain, again, for maximum strength. When finished, the front will be 18 3/4 inches long and the back piece 30 inches long. The lengths are measured from the inside corners of the side blocks.'[10]' The two pieces are measured, and four ends for the joints [*kliuchi* lit. keys] are cut out, again using the table saw and a crosscut saw. The key is made extra long and is trimmed only after the skeleton frame is joined.

'[9]' The back board may be 1 1/8 inches or 1 1/4 inches wide.
'[10]' This is because the dimensions of the sound board and inner area of the frame are the critical factors in determining the musical characteristics of the instrument.

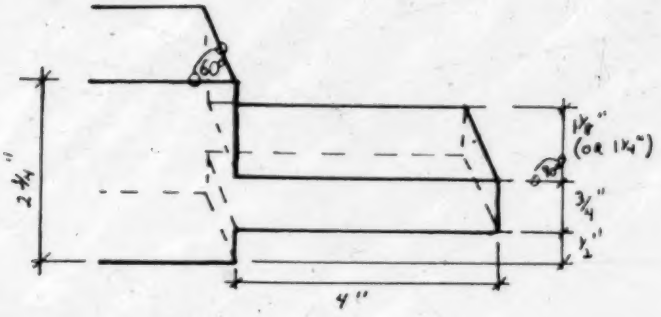

Figure 10. Front or back board ready for joint

While fitting the pieces, the lock was periodically filed down until the desired fit was attained.

After the pieces are fitted, they are glued together with Elmers carpenter's glue, which Chychul calls *karuk*.'[10] The extra ends of the front and back boards are cut off with the electric saw.

The back piece is slightly planed on top to provide a slightly convex curvature. This is said to provide added strength and resistance against the tension of the strings.

Though obviously a critical phase of construction, as so much of the *tsymbaly*'s strength depends on the skeleton frame, the frame takes Mr. Chychul only about 2 hours to construct from beginning to end. Because the skeleton frame will eventually be completely covered and hidden from sight, it perhaps does not require some of the time consuming finishing of other steps.

The next day, after the carpenter's glue has dried, the edges of the joints that stick out are planed, belt sanded,

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'[10] Literally carpenter's glue. In the Old Country, this was usually an animal glue.

and hand sanded, until flush with the front board, back board, and side blocks.

B. Bottom Board [*Spidnia doshka*]

For the bottom board, maple or ribbon mohoganny plywood has been used by Mr. Chychul. However, he now prefers birch plywood as he feels that it provides the optimum combination of good sound and strength. He prefers the grain to go vertically, as this allows him to get more pieces per plywood board.

The birch plywood is measured with a trapezoidal pattern of the bottom board, marked with a large square, and cut on the table saw. The back piece must be perfectly symmetrical, or else, the *tsymbaly* will never tune properly.'[10] To check for symmetry, the board is flipped over. It should fit equally well on both sides. The board is also purposely left too wide at the front and back. This allows for extra cutting should the fit be inadequate.

The piece is put on, glued, and nailed with 3/4 inch finishing nails. A wooden frame is put over this to provide even pressure, and three clamps per side at the front and back are applied while the glue dries.

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[10] See "Tuning," Chap 5.

C. Facing

The skeleton frame is never seen in the finished product. Instead, the four sides are covered by maple facings.

First, a thin 1/4 inch board of black maple is added to the ends of the skeleton frame on the side blocks. The top edge of this board is angled at 20° to match the angle of the side block. A small piece of arborite is used to check that the top of the maple board is flush with the side block.

The pieces are glued, and two 3/4 inch finishing nails are used to insure they stay in place. The frame is put in a vise, and 3 clamps make sure that the two pieces are properly glued. (The process is repeated on the other end of the frame.) When dry, the sides and bottom are trimmed with the table saw, files, and sanders.

Similarly, two pieces of black maple are cut from 4 by 4 inch pieces of rough lumber with the electric table saw. The pieces are trimmed and planed with an electric planer, and hand sanded. The result is two, 40 inch long maple boards, 7/16 inch thick which will provide the front and back facings of the *tsymbaly*.

For strength, the facing for the back board is planed so as to provide a slightly convex top. The bottom of the skeleton frame and board are checked for a flush fit. An electric sander is used to eliminate any uneven spots.

Elmers carpenter's glue is spread on the front or back of the skeleton frame and the respective maple facing is put over it. It overlaps the top side of the skeleton frame by approximately 1/4 inch, to allow for a flush fit with the top board.

A piece of wood is placed over the maple facing to distribute pressure from clamping evenly. Three clamps per side are used. In addition, chips of wood are inserted at the ends to insure a tight fit. As the clamps are slowly tightened, a hammer is used to tap the maple facing in a final adjustment. After the front and back facings have dried, the ends are trimmed off with the table saw, files, and sanders.

Once the facing is on, the side blocks are tapered with the table saw. The bottom edge of the sideblocks are angled, and the bottom corners are rounded. These are then filed and sanded.

Figure 11. Tapered side of the instrument (end view)

According to Chychul, tapering the side blocks makes the instrument lighter, easier to remove from its case, and provides an aesthetically pleasing styling.

D. Dowels

Wooden dowels (pegs) may be inserted into the front of the instrument, into the side blocks in order to strengthen the structure. This step is optional, as Chychul says a well built instrument doesn't really need them. Also, screws could be used instead.

Three holes, 1 inch deep and 5/16 inch wide are drilled in a triangular pattern at left and right sides of the front facings.

Figure 12. Dowels inserted through the front into the side blocks

A piece of maple is cut and filed down to a tight fit. The pieces, cut slightly long, are hammered into the instrument. The ends are cut off, and sanded with the electric sander until flush with the front.'''

''' As mentioned, Chychul does not always include this feature. In this case, he included it for demonstrative purposes. Later, he covers the dowels with decals (see "Ornamentation").

E. Supporting Bridges [*Pidpory*]

A lip on which the supporting bridges will rest must first be prepared. Pieces of maple are glued and nailed with 3/4 inch finishing nails inside the frame at the ends of and perpendicular to the top bridges. Each lip measures approximately 2 1/2 inches long, 1/4 inch wide, about 5/8 inch from the top of the frame.

Each supporting bridges is made of spruce. Two are needed on either side of and parallel to the centre top bridge, and one or two by the side top bridge. They rest inside the frame and support the top board.'''

The supporting bridge is 1/2 inch wide, and approximately 1 inch high. Its length is determined by measuring the distance from the front to the back of the frame. At both ends 1/4 inch section is cut out, so as to bring the supporting bridge to the top of the frame when joined to the lip.

The top is made with a slight convex curvature. This helps support the top board better and keeps it from buckling.

Holes, 5/16 inch in diameter and 3/8 inch deep are drilled for the sound posts [*pidstavky*]. These are placed 1/3 of the way from the ends of the supporting bridges. After the points are marked, they are checked against the top bridges, as the supporting bridges should rest below the openings in the top bridges.

''' See photograph, Figure 21.
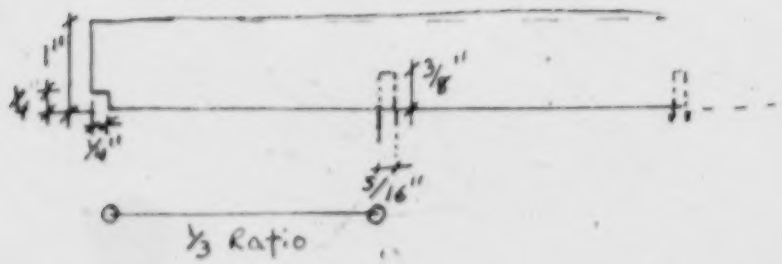
Figure 13. Support bridge with sound posts

The supporting bridges can be made of maple, although Chychul prefers sitka spruce. A drop of carpenter's glue is placed into the holes, and the sound posts are driven in.

The supporting bridges are put upside down inside the frame, and the proper height is marked on the sound posts. The excess is cut off.

A hole is angled 45° through the ends of the supporting bridges, using a finishing nail for a drill bit. A 1 1/4 inch finishing nail is driven in at each end to hold the sound posts in place.

The exact placement of the supporting bridges is determined from other *tsymbaly*. The centre supporting bridges rest approximately 1 1/2 inches apart, but exact placement may vary slightly. The side supporting bridge generally rests about 1/2 inch to the side of the top bridge when only one of the supporting bridges are used. No glue is used, in case someday it should be necessary to move or change the support bridges.

F. Painting

In the past, Chychul has used a variety of stains, oils, and varnishes for finishes. He now chooses a "sunfire" design, copied from Nick Supervich.

A temporary top board is placed on the instrument to keep paint from marking the inside. The instrument is placed on a workbench on top of a small box, and painting begins. A dark brown and a lighter brown or brown/orange spray paints are used. The lighter coloured paint is applyed first. After the top and sides are sprayed, the instrument is turned over (supported by the temporary top board on top of the box) and the back is painted.

The darker paint is applied to the sides, creating a slightly uneven "sunfire" effect. The top board is similarly painted: lighter in the middle, and darker at the sides. After the paint has thoroughly dried, a spray acrilyc finish is applied. This protects the instrument as well as gives an aethetically pleasing shine.

Chychul says that an electric paint sprayer would make the job quicker, and apply the paint more evenly. Using the spray can method requires careful attention in order to produce an even finish.

G. Ornamentation

This step reflects some of Chychul's sense of aesthetics. It involves decorating the side blocks, the top edges of the front and back, and the front and back of the

instrument.

For the side blocks, slightly oversized pieces of arborite are cut out. Contact cement is brushed on the arborite and on the side blocks, (on top where the pegs and pins will eventually be placed).

In the 10 minutes required for the contact cement to set, various decorative "trimmings" were shown. These consist of red or gold reflective and patterned reflective decals of the type occassionally used to decorate vans and cars. Also, a red material used on drums, and a mother of pearl design were shown. He has been decorating *tsymbaly* with these materials for about five years.

Chychul believes that in the old country, nothing was put on. Builders used to varnish or stain. On occassion, Chychul has kept his *tsymbaly* plain, sometimes using Swedish oil, urethane, or a similar product in order to keep a natural colour.'''

When the contact cement has set, the arborite is fitted, and them is hammered down. Excess arborite is trimmed with the table saw and filed away. The "glittering," the gold patterned decal he has chosen is measured out on a board and cut with a razor-edged knife. The self stick "glittering" is placed on the arborite, smoothed out, and trimmed with a file. This is then covered with masking tape to protect it from future work. The tape is also trimmed.

''' See photograph, Figure 3.

Two long diamond patterns are traced on the decal and and cut out. (As the back of the *tsymbaly* is longer, the diamond pattern for the back is made slightly longer than the front pattern.) Each diamond pattern is centred on the front or back, respectively. On either side of each diamond, a small design (parallel to the sides) is applied. (This design has the effect of covering the dowels.) A thin, 1/8 inch strip of decal is applied to the top front and back edges of the instrument.

H. Measuring for Pegs and Pins

Mr. Chychul has systematized his own procedure for plotting the positions and drilling holes for pins and tuning pegs on the side blocks.

Before his new method, he would mark out a grid pattern on the side blocks. First, a vertical line, 7/8 inch from the sides of the block is drawn. Next, parallel horizontal lines are drawn, 7/16 inch from each other. In order to prevent overlapping, a point 3/8 inch is measured to the side and bottom of the vertical line. An angled line is then drawn from the top of the vertical line to the point. On each horizontal line, points for pins are marked, approximately 9/16 inch or 5/8 inch from each other. The result is the required grid pattern of 120 points. (6 rows of 20 points.)

Figure 14. Grid pattern on sides for drilling pegs or pins

Once the grid pattern is drawn, a centre punch prepares each hole for drilling. A small block of wood, with a hole already drilled through, is used to hold a hand drill perpendicularly to the proper 90° angle of the block, as well as to insure that holes for the pegs are drilled to a proper and uniform depth of 1 1/4 or 1 1/8 inches.

Chychul's new method greatly streamlines the procedure. He has invented a form for drilling a row at a time.''' To prepare the side block, six points on each side are marked and drilled with a 3/16 inch bit. The form, consisting of 1/2 inch iron and 3/4 inch maple is then placed on top and held in place by a nail on each side in the prepared holes. This allows Chychul to drill holes quickly and uniformly. It takes approximately 12 minutes to drill the remaining holes. As well, it becomes unneccessary to measure out and draw the entire grid pattern.

Mr. Chychul emphasizes that when drilling, one must quickly bring the drill in and out. Repeated drilling of the

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''' See photograph, Figure 21.

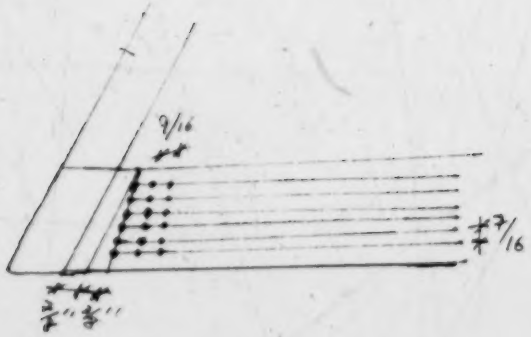

Figure 14. Grid pattern on sides for drilling pegs or pins

Once the grid pattern is drawn, a centre punch prepares each hole for drilling. A small block of wood, with a hole already drilled through, is used to hold a hand drill perpendicularly to the proper 90° angle of the block, as well as to insure that holes for the pegs are drilled to a proper and uniform depth of 1 1/4 or 1 1/8 inches.

Chychul's new method greatly streamlines the procedure. He has invented a form for drilling a row at a time.''' To prepare the side block, six points on each side are marked and drilled with a 3/16 inch bit. The form, consisting of 1/2 inch iron and 3/4 inch maple is then placed on top and held in place by a nail on each side in the prepared holes. This allows Chychul to drill holes quickly and uniformly. It takes approximately 12 minutes to drill the remaining holes. As well, it becomes unneccessary to measure out and draw the entire grid pattern.

Mr. Chychul emphasizes that when drilling, one must quickly bring the drill in and out. Repeated drilling of the

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''' See photograph, Figure 21.

same hole will result in too big a hole that won't hold the peg. The very top of the hole is trimmed with the drill bit just lightly touching.

To prepare the second side block for pins, an almost identical procedure is used. In this case, the grid pattern for the pins is arranged opposite the pegs, so that the closest peg will match the furthest peg.'''

The form for the pin side consists of a template with holes prepared an equal distance from each other. Holes are drilled "*na oko*" [by eyesight] with a finishing nail to prepare for the pins. Simply nailing the pins in would result in the wood eventually splitting.

The pins themselves are made of cut bicycle spokes, or 1 1/2 inches finishing nails with the heads cut off and ends rounded on an electric grindstone. The pins are nailed in, one row at a time. Each row is checked and leveled with a piece of wood to an even height of approximately 5/16 inch.

Tuning pegs are bought in Willingdon, Alberta, and cost $72 for 300. For efficiency, they are inserted with a hand drill. (An electric drill would burn out the hole.) Chychul is careful to leave a little bit of the threads [*gvintу*] showing, as later stringing will turn them to their proper depth. Also, he inserts pegs in a diagonal pattern, skipping every other one. Eventually he backtracks to fill in the missed holes.

''' See the design, Figure 5.

I. Top Bridges [*Konyky*]

The term *konyk* also means pony in Ukrainian. Chychul says that this term is used for the top bridges because the strings ride the *konyk*.

If the maker is constructing *tsymbaly* for the first time, the pins and strings must be set first. Each top bridge must then be measured to the courses of strings. Two top bridges are required. Chychul generally chooses maple, though oak and spruce may be used.

A piece of wood is cut, 3/8 inches by 11/16 inches high, and approximately 15 inches wide. The length will be reduced later, but for now, a longer length makes the wood easier to work with.

It is necessary to mark 11 holes through which the courses of strings will later pass. The wood is centred top to bottom . A series of eleven points, 1 inch apart horizontally are marked. A punch marks each point, which will be the centre of each hole.

Vertical lines, 1/2 inch from centre are drawn. Two more vertical lines, 1/16 inch away are drawn. Two horizontal lines, 1/4 inch above and below are drawn. The finished holes will measure approximately 1/8 inch apart, and 3/16 inch from the top and bottom.

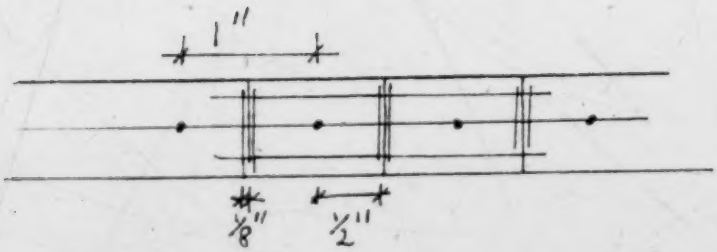

Figure 15. Markings for openings for top bridges

A hole is drilled in each centre, 3/8 inch and 5/16 inch round files are used to complete and round out a 7/16 inch eliptical opening.

Identical procedures are used for the centre and base top bridges. Because of differences in angles, however, the holes for the side top bridge will measure 1 1/8 inches and be slightly angled. Chychul does this without measuring. The angle should be about 60° or 65° instead of perpendicular.

The last two holes (on each end) have not been filed out. The ends are cut horizontally with the table saw. A hacksaw then cuts the far ends of the hole on top, and about 3/4 inch from the bottom.

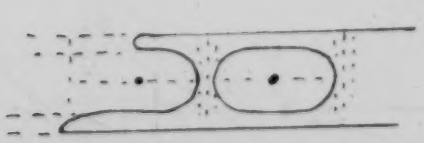

Figure 16. Openings in the top bridge

The ends are angled with the hacksaw and filed down.

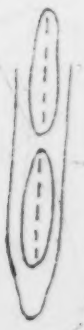

Figure 17. Top view of end of a top bridge

To make sure the bottom is flat, a flat file is put in a vise, and the bridge is run over the file several times.

Finally, a hacksaw cuts the top of each hole. This is to allow the courses of strings to slip through during stringing. Should repairs be needed, it also allows one to remove the top bridges at a later date without unstringing the whole instrument.

The top bridge is sanded a bit more and is basically finished. It is sometimes painted black, or varnished, but Chychul chooses to leave it plain this time.

On top, the finished top bridges measure roughly 10 5/8 inches and 11 5/8 inches respectively. There are 9 closed and 2 open holes on each top bridge.

A small groove is cut on top with the table saw. Later, a bicycle spoke is inserted into this groove, on which the treble strings will rest. The top bridge is angled at a sharp 7° to 9° angle from vertical. The piece is then sanded down.

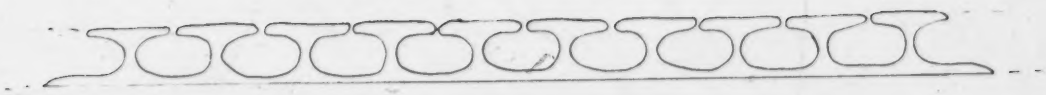

Figure 18. Top bridge, full view

J. Top Board [*Verkhnia doshka*]

The top board is made from cedar siding. Because one piece of siding isn't wide enough, two pieces are fitted together.

They are first placed together, measured with a trapezoidal form to determine their lengths, and cut at 60° angles. The pieces are necessarily long to allow for future fitting and trimming at the front and backs of the frame. One piece will measure approximately 10 inches wide, the second piece approximately 5 1/2 inches.

The wood is taken to the table saw, and cut to a thickness just over 1/4 inch. As the blade, rises to only 3 inches, the larger board is not cut through. The initial cut is trimmed with a cross cut saw, and the centre shaved down with a hand planer. Both pieces are smoothed with electric and hand sanders.

The two pieces are fitted and glued together in a form. Finishing nails help keep the pieces down. Excess glue is

wiped away with a damp cloth.

When dry, the top board is again sanded with the electric and hand sanders. Eventually, a fine grade of sandpaper is used.

The top board is fitted on the frame. Because symmetry is critical to the tuning, the board is turned over to make sure it fits equally well both ways. The top board is marked at the front and back of the frame. The excess is trimmed with the table saw. Front to back, the finished top board measures approximately 12 1/2 inches.

K. Sound Holes

Chychul has tried various patterns for the two sound holes. In the past, he has copied from other builders, and has old copper templates for designs.''' Now Chychul chooses to excercise his own sense of aesthetics and makes his own design.

The centres of the sound holes are marked 6 1/4 inches from the top and bottom. The sound holes are 10 inches apart, or each 5 inches from the centre top bridge.

A coffee lid is screwed into the centre of the sound hole and used as a compass to make a circle, 4 inches in diameter. Inside, six smaller circles, 1 3/4 inches in diameter are traced along the inside edges of the larger circle. For the centre, a circle 1 7/8 inches in diameter is later made using a drill bit generally used for fitting door

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''' The templates were made by Peter Budniak.

knobs.

Holes are made with an electric drill in each of the circles, and the circles are roughly cut out with an electric sabre saw. The holes are finished with a half moon saw.

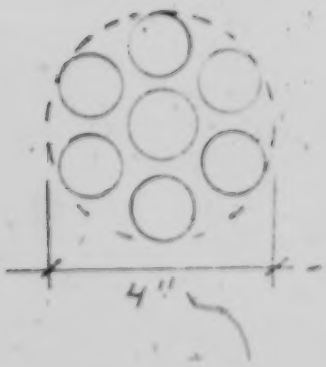

Figure 19. Sound hole on the top board

L. Fitting the Top Board [*Verkhnia Doshka*]

Front and back, the top board should fit tightly. However, the top board should have almost 1/8 inch leeway on both sides. Without it, the board would later buckle when the instrument is strung. The tension of the strings brings the side pieces together.

Two spacers measuring approximately 3/8 inch, with one right angle and a convex curve, made of maple are prepared. A groove is cut on top, and bicycle spokes are inserted. Each spacer rests parallel, next to the side blocks, and runs the length of the top board. The bicycle spoke is a contact point for the strings.

knobs.

Holes are made with an electric drill in each of the circles, and the circles are roughly cut out with an electric sabre saw. The holes are finished with a half moon saw.

Figure 19. Sound hole on the top board

L. Fitting the Top Board [*Verkhnia Doshka*]

Front and back, the top board should fit tightly. However, the top board should have almost 1/8 inch leeway on both sides. Without it, the board would later buckle when the instrument is strung. The tension of the strings brings the side pieces together.

Two spacers measuring approximately 3/8 inch, with one right angle and a convex curve, made of maple are prepared. A groove is cut on top, and bicycle spokes are inserted. Each spacer rests parallel, next to the side blocks, and runs the length of the top board. The bicycle spoke is a contact point for the strings.

The top board is not glued or nailed. String tension puts pressure on the two spacers and two top bridges to keep the top board in place. Should repairs ever be needed, strings can be loosened, and the top board quickly removed by means of a hook like instrument inserted into the sound holes. Before the top board is fitted for the final time, Chychul stamps his name and the date inside the frame on the bottom board, under each sound hole.

M. Playing Sticks [*Pal'tsiatky*]

Beaters are made of maple, birch or mahogany. Chychul varies the length, but chose to use a "Zelisko" pattern.[''']

Two pieces of maple are cut 3/8 inch wide, 1 1/2 inches high, and approximately 8 inches long.

The pattern is traced on each piece using a prepared form. Holes are drilled at the end of the pattern and expanded to an ellipse 1/4 inch high and 5/16 inch long.

The pattern is then roughly cut out with an electric sabre saw. The edges are smoothed with files and increasingly finer sandpaper. In the end product, the tip measures 1/4 inch wide, slightly less than the finger hold area.

''' See "John Zelisko," Chapter 5; also "Old vs. New," Chapter 5.

Figure 20. Playing sticks of "Zelisko" type

N. Stringing

Different types of wire have been experimented with for use as strings. Mr. Chychul says that plain brass strings break too easily. While steel doesnot break, it doesn't provide the proper sound-qualities [*ne maie holos*]. Bronze-brass isn't bad, but Mr. Chychul feels that a bronze-phosphate alloy provides the optimum combination of sound and strength.

The treble strings uses #8 wire, although the top 3 courses sometimes use #7 wire. The top 6 courses of base strings use #8 wire, the next two courses are strung with #9 wire, and the last two courses use either #9 wire or #10 wire.

The treble strings are strung first. To begin, one string of each note is loosely put on. The centre or treble top bridge is then slid underneath. (A measure tells him

exactly where.) The rest of the treble strings are fitted in one course at a time from top to bottom.

When the treble strings are ready, the base top bridge is fitted to the right side. In the process, each course of treble strings is slid through its respective slot to find a tunnel through the top bridge.

When making and stringing strings, the wire is kept in place at the feet to keep the roll from unravelling. The wire is pulled through the tuning peg, and a small loop is made by holding the wire with pliers and wrapping the end around, counter clockwise seven or eight times. At the other end, the wire is cut approximately 4 to 5 inches past the tuning peg.

The tuning peg is then turned with a tuning key, 3 or 4 times until the threads are hidden and the string is tight. Care is taken to keep the string near the base of the tuning peg. Meanwhile, at the other end, the end of a screwdriver is used to hold the loop at the base of the pin. This process is repeated 120 times and takes approximately four hours from beginning to end.

O. Tuning

After stringing, tuning begins. Chychul uses the Gypsy tuning system.''' He tunes to other *tsymbaly*.

Once in a while, he stops in order to verify the integrity of the instrument. He tries playing a tune in

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''' See Tunings, chapter 5.

order to check the tone. The strings are scrutinized for good, even spacing. The instrument is checked for curves, to make sure that the string tension isn't causing the instrument bend and buckle.

It takes at least four tunings before the instrument begins to hold its tune. Also, Chychul says sound improves with time. The instrument never sounds good the first day. It takes at least three Sundays for the sound to mature.

P. Tuning Key [*Kliuch*]

A 7/16 inch by 4 inch screw, is put in a vise. After the screw is put in a vise, its head is cut off with a hacksaw and the centre is marked with a punch. A 13/64 inch drill bit is chosen, and a hole, about 1 inch deep is drilled using an electric hand power drill, through the top. A small amount of oil primes the hole to keep it from smoking during drilling.

The end of a flat file has been ground to the square size of a tuning peg. This is banged in with a heavy hammer, and the sides of the screw are also beaten to make a square hole. Old pegs (rejects without threads) are used to check the fit.

The screw is then put in an electric hand drill. The drill is put in a vise sideways. The screw is then finished. This is done by pressing various grades of files and sandpapers to make patterns and a smooth shiny surface.

A drill press is then fitted with a 3/16 inch bit. At the other end of the screw, a center punch marks the side of the screw, and a hole is drilled, 1 inch from the end. This hole will be used to fit the screw into a handle.

The handle consists of a 1/4 inch copper pipe. (With heavier steel, no wood is needed.) A piece of wood is filed to fit inside, and hammered into the pipe on an anvil. The wood and pipe are cut to a length of 3 3/4 inches with a hacksaw. This copper pipe is "shoe shined" with sandpaper.

The centre is marked with the punch, and the drill press is used to make a 7/16 inch hole. The centre punch is also used to mark the wood at both ends. A hole is drilled through, to make room for a nail that will hold the screw and handle together.

A grindstone is used to curve the top of the screw. The handle is fitted in a vice, and the screw pushed inside. The head of a nail is cut off, and the nail is hammered through the handle and screw hole in order to hold the two pieces tightly together. The ends of the handle (and nail) are filed, corners are ground down. The result is a "T" shaped tuning key, that Mr. Chychul taught himself to make.

Figure 21. Photograph of T
pins into a side block (Pho

m Chychul drilling holes for
ograph by Mark Bandera)

V. *Tsymbaly* Making in East Central Alberta

Tsymbaly Making in East Central Alberta

More than 20 living *tsymbaly* makers have been positively identified in the area of East Central Alberta.[119] The present day craft has links with earlier tradition in East Central Alberta, and before that with the Old Country.

With continuity has also come change. Both are evident when observing *tsymbaly* in the area. Some differences between modern and old time *tsymbaly* reflect technological change. Other differences reflect contextual changes of the *tsymbaly* in community and musical roles. It is significant to note that there is much variation and individual expression within the loose-knit community of *tsymbaly* makers.

A. "It All Started in Andrew"

As one *tsymbaly* craftsman states, "It all started in Andrew."[120] He was refering to John Zelisko, who shaped much of the *tsymbaly* tradition in East Central Alberta. Zelisko was born in Ukraine in 1884, and moved to Canada at the beginning of the 20th century. He worked in construction and lived in Andrew, Alberta until his death in 1965.[121]

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[119] See "List Of *Tsymbaly* Makers," Appendix II.
[120] Taped interview with John Kinasewich, Edmonton, Alberta, July 1984.
[121] Dreams and Destinies (Edmonton: Andrew Historical Society, 1980) pp. 633-34; Taped interview with Mike Ewanchuk, *Tsymbaly* maker and brother-in-law of John Zelisko,

Zelisko is primarily remembered as a musician and a maker of violins and *tsymbaly*. He was known as the first Ukrainian musician in the area, and had his own band, the "John Zelisko Orchestra." Though he also made violins, Zelisko is best known for his *tsymbaly* making by other *tsymbaly* craftsmen. There is even some lore among makers that Zelisko did nothing but produce *tsymbaly*.[122]

"Old Man" Zelisko set the standard for *tsymbaly* making in East Central Alberta.[123] There was status attached to playing a Zelisko *tsymbaly*.[124] Many present day *tsymbaly* craftsmen took their first measurements from Zelisko *tsymbaly*, and a few have gone out of their way to acquire one.[125]

Today's craftsmen sometimes say that not all of Zelisko's *tsymbaly* worked, but that others produced exceptional tone.[126] Many makers also view their own *tsymbaly* as improvements of the earlier models.

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[121](cont'd) April 1984.
[122] Interview with Bill Ropchan, *tsymbaly* maker, age 82, Edmonton, Alberta, March 1984.
[123] The "Old Man" characterization is respectfully used by *tsymbaly* makers John Babichuk, George Strynadka, and Mike Ewanchuk.
[124] Tom Chychul's brother played on Zelisko *tsymbaly* with the "Northern Troubadors."
[125] Tom Chychul, Metro Lastiwka, Nick Supervich, either own or have taken measurements from Zelisko *tsymbaly*.
[126] Bill Ropchan remembers a *tsymbaly* made by Zelisko in the 1950's that he wanted very badly.

B. Old vs. New

Quite a bit of lore exists about early *tsymbaly* in East Central Alberta and the Old Country. Early *tsymbaly* display some characteristics that are uncommon today. A typical instrument was bought fourty-three years ago in Smoky Lake by Tom Chychul. The front board measured 27 inches and the back board measured 40 inches long. It was 14 3/4 inches wide, and 2 1/4 inches deep. The strings were iron, the tuning pegs were threadless, and made by a blacksmith. The bottom board was nailed. He said, it "don't sound as good, but don't break." This *tsymbaly* had 22 courses of strings, but was not tuned in the Gypsy tuning [*tsyhans'kyi strii*] common today.[127]

Today there is a concensus that smaller *tsymbaly* are better. Many craftsmen have stated that in the Old Country *tsymbaly* were bigger and unwieldly.[128] Mike Oleksiuk, age 81 of Smoky Lake, Alberta, makes *tsymbaly* representative of the old type. He makes them the way his father taught him.[129]

Tsymbaly craftsmen of East Central Alberta identify two basic types of *tsymbaly* brought to Canada.[130] The first type of *tsymbaly* are variously called Galician [*halyts'ki*] or Ukrainian [*ukrains'ki*]. The second type of *tsymbaly* are called Gypsy [*tsyhans'ki*], Bukovynian [*bukovyns'ki*], Hutsul

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[127] See "Tuning", Chapter 5.
[128] John Babichuk, Tom Chychul say Old Country *tsymbaly* were larger. However, Nick Mischi disagrees. He says that both larger and smaller *tsymbaly* were made in the Old Country.
[129] Personal interviews with Mike Oleksiuk, May-June 1984; *Our Legacy* (Winnipeg: Smoky Lake Cultural & Education Centre, 1983) pp. 663-64.
[130] Taped interview with John Babichuk, May 1984.

[*hutsul's'ki*], or Romanian [*rumuns'ki*]. The first type, Galician, are said to have had 4 or 5 strings per course. They often had only 16 or 18 courses of strings. The second type, Gypsy, had 6 strings per course, twenty or twenty two courses of strings. Gypsy *tsymbaly* have become the standard type today.

Several distinctive features of *tsymbaly* which were common in the Old Country and in East Central Alberta have been disappearing in recent times. One old time feature is a small hole cut into the right hand corner of the top board. There are several ideas as to the purpose of this tradition. In Smoky Lake, three *tsymbaly* builders came up with three theories.[131] One said, it was for holding the sticks, the second said for holding the tuning key, and a third for putting money in and shaking it out.[132] Mr. Pete Holowaty still includes the small hole in the *tsymbaly* he makes, as well as two longer holes in the front board.[133]

The *troista muzyka* tradition often included playing while standing.[134] A leather strap was placed around the player's neck and attached to the side blocks in order to free the player for movement. As the need to play while standing has diminished, this feature has virtually

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[131] Personal interviews with John Babichuk, Mike Oleksiuk, and Metro Lastiwka, Smoky Lake, Alberta, May 1984.
[132] Mierczyński, p. 154, provides a diagram, and says the hole is for holding the tuning key; while Toelken, p. 111, states the hole is for allowing the boy who plays to shake money out.
[133] See the photograph, Figure 2, Ostashek wedding, for this feature.
[134] See the photograph, Figure 2.

disappeared.

The standard today is for two sound holes in the sound board. In the Old Country, *tsymbaly* variously had two sound holes, four sound holes,[135] or a series of small sound holes along the edges of the side blocks.[136] This would depend on the building tradition of the area and the *tsymbaly* builder.

M.V. Lysenko writes that tsymbaly strings were made of copper or iron wire.[137] Tom Chychul believes that when the first immigration to Canada occurred, iron wire was the standard. Nick Mischi remembers that bronze was also available in the Old Country.

There are two basic types of playing sticks [*paltsiatky*]. One kind consists of a circular opening for the forefinger, a small head at the end, and a relatively straight body.[138] The second type consists of an opened grip for the forefinger, a small head with a hole, and a curved convex body. The Zelisko design conformed to this second type, and is most popular today. Nick Mischi confirms that both types were used in the Old Country.

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[135] Miercyński, pp. 150-155.
[136] Nick Mischi says his uncle built *tsymbaly* with sound holes by the side blocks at the beginning of the 20th Century.
[137] M.V. Lysenko, p. 51.
[138] Chabyniak, p. 46. shows a photograph of similar playing sticks.

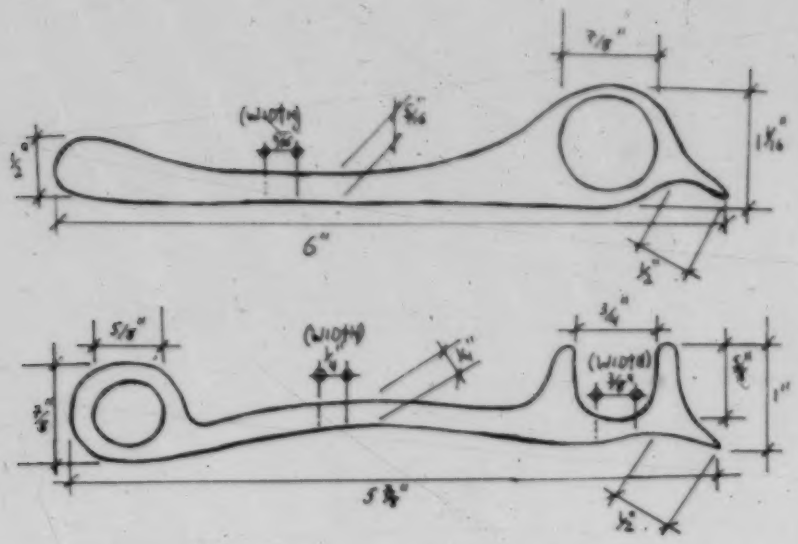

Figure 22. Two types of playing sticks used in East Central Alberta

When asked what the hole at the head of the sticks was for, Chychul said, "*aby faini buly*" [So they'll be nice]. Mr. Chychul makes the holes because they are traditional and ornamental, rather than for any functional purpose. However, comparison of both stick types shows that both have closed holes, though at opposite ends. One possible function is that of easy storage. In Mr. Metro Lastiwka's workshop in Smoky Lake, his sticks are hung on nails.

Nick Mischi, though primarily a player, makes sticks for himself the way his uncle did in Bukovyna. They belong to the type with closed finger holes, but in addition, the head is covered with thin, soft leather [*sap'ian*].[133]

The sound of the *tsymbaly* can be greatly affected by the sticks used: the harder the wood, the more brilliant the

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[133] M. V. Lysenko, p. 152, describes sticks covered with *sap'ian*, lit. morrocan leather.

sound, for when the string is struck, it is dampened for a shorter period. Covering a stick with leather or other material mellows the *tsymbaly's* sound.'[40]

C. The *Tsymbaly* Craft Today

Today's makers are still essentially carrying forward the traditions of previous makers in the area. Nevertheless, the craftsman often feels free to depart from traditional design, expressing his own modern sense of aesthetics and invention.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of *tsymbaly* construction today is the availability of modern tools, materials, and technologies. This is evident in Tom Chychul's production of *tsymbaly*, and is representative of all the *tsymbaly* makers interviewed for this study.

The outward appearance of *tsymbaly* are often defined by one of two aesthetic philosophies. Traditionalists believe that there is nothing so beautiful as the natural wood. These makers use stains, varnishes, oils, and similar finishes. They avoid covering the *tsymbaly* with man made materials.

Other makers decorate their *tsymbaly* with plastics, glittering decals, mother of pearl designs, and acetate. In the process, a great deal of the *tsymbaly* are covered. Much of the lure of these designs lie in the reflective effects of the *tsymbaly* on stage under the lights.'[41] Each of these

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[40] Donington, p. 96.
[41] See "The Craftsman," Chapter 3.

two aesthetic approaches, though diametrically opposed, has managed to find a following and carve out a niche in the *tsymbaly* market.

Tsymbaly makers often stress their own virtues when producing *tsymbaly*. Some examples follow. Nick Supervich, a non-player, is a master carpenter. His *tsymbaly* feature molded and curved backs, sunburst finishes, and inlaid electronic pickups. A *tsymbaly* maker who also is also a *tsymbaly* player may lack the carpentry skills of Nick Supervich. By contrast, that maker may tend to stress the musical characteristics [*holos*] of his instrument.

In an effort to improve their *tsymbaly*, makers have researched instrument building. Generally, *tsymbaly* makers have been dissappointed by literature concerning "hammer dulcimers."[142] They have, however, taken cues from other musical instrument crafts and traditions.

Mike Ewanchuk builds violins at home, and has a collection of works about violins. He takes principles learned from violin making, and applies them to making *tsymbaly*. For example, he is very careful what he uses to treat the wood. He never uses paint or decals.'[143]

Great care may be taken in choosing materials. Mr. Paul Ewasiuk prefers rosewood imported from South Africa. The wood is cured for several years, and it may take six months to build one musical instrument. He feels that in order to

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[142] See "Related Musical Traditions," Chapter 2.
[143] Taped interview with Mike Ewanchuk, April 1984.

insure that the glue sets properly, several weeks is needed between certain steps.'[44]

Craftsmen such as Tom Chychul use woods that are locally available. They make sure the woods are suitably dry, without knots, and cut properly. These makers try to economize, producing a functional, well constructed product, with a minimum of time and money. Chychul, when making the bottom board, cuts the plywood he uses to get the most useable pieces per sheet.'[45]

The playing sticks reflect many of the makers' modern ideas. Nick Supervich colour codes the sticks he makes in order to differentiate between right and left. He claims that when playing, as they wear, they fit differently. Pete Holowaty adds a small piece of teak to the head of his sticks to make them last longer. This also will increase the brilliance of *tsymbaly* when playing. Mr. Mike Ewanchuk covers the tips of some sticks with felt, resulting in a mellower tone. For similar effect Paul Ewasiuk covers the tips with rubber.'[46]

Modernization and innovation go hand in hand in the *tsymbaly* craft. One of the reasons given for preference of curved sticks is the smaller size of *tsymbaly* today. With the courses of strings closer together, it is thought that

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'[44] Taped interview with Paul Ewasiuk, Lamont, July 1984. An article and picture of his *tsymbaly* appears in Zonia Keywan, "A labor of Love," *The Western Producer*, 10 July 1976, Sec C, p. 4.
'[45] See "Bottom Board," Chapter 4.
'[46] Donington, p. 96.

curved sticks reduce the chances of striking unwanted tones.

Many of todays craftsmen make stands to go with their *tsymbaly*. As a result, fewer players hold the instrument on their knees when playing while seated, as is traditional.'[*] Mr. Ewasiuk angles his stand toward himself in order to make the strings more visible. This change has also caused him to alter the playing sticks further, as he angles the tips to reflect the angle of *tsymbaly* while playing.

One of the newest adaptations of *tsymbaly* is amplification.'[**] In order to better compete with other musical instruments, *tsymbaly* makers and players have been experimenting with increasingly sophisticated technology. As microphones have proved inadequate, there has been a trend toward electronic pickups. These pickups were initially attached to the outside with clips or putty. Now, some builders inlay pickups inside the instrument as a standard feature. One simply plugs the *tsymbaly* into an amplifier and plays.

The extent of this interest in electronic gadgetry is attested to by a new electric *tsymbaly* being developed by Joe Tkachyk.'[***] It consists of a solid block of wood, 1 1/2 inches high, and has 8 electronic pickups.

'[*] M.V. Lysenko, *Narodni muzychni instrumenty na Ukraini*, p. 52.

'[**] In a telephones interview, Bill Wolansky suggested amplification as another reason for the trend towards smaller *tsymbaly*.

'[***] Personal Interview with Joe Tkachyk, Edmonton, July 1984.

D. Tuning

Tsymbaly tunings, though basically chromatic, do not follow a continuous sequence. This is in order to allow for more efficiency in playing. Notes commonly played consecutively in chord patterns are placed closer together in order to eliminate unneccessary motion while reaching for strings. Each course of strings, divided by a centre top bridge, produces an interval of a fifth. For exact tuning, the lengths of strings on each side of the top bridge must exactly reflect a 3 to 2 ratio.'[150]

There are two basic types of tuning systems. One is usually called Galician [*halyts'kyi*] or Ukrainian [*ukrains'kyi*].'[151] Another more common tuning is variously called Gypsy [*tsyhans'kyi*], Bukovynian [*bukovyns'kyi*], or Romanian [*rumuns'kyi*], and Wallachian [*volos'kyi*].'[152]

The Galician tuning lacks a *b♭*. As the Galician *tsymbaly* were traditionally smaller, with fewer courses of strings. This tuning allowed for a range equal to Bukovynian *tsymbaly*, though at the expense of the capability of modulating keys.

Most makers and players don't differentiate between Gypsy/Bukovynian and Romanian/Wallachian *tsymbaly*. Mischi says that both tunings follow the same pattern, but that the

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'[150] M.V. Lysenko, *Narodni muzychni instrumenty na Ukraini*, pp. 54-55.
'[151] Mierczynski, p. 153, provides a close equivalent for this tuning.
'[152] Slight variations in tunings exist. For example, the *C* and *C#* strings in courses 2 and 4 Gypsy tuning are sometimes reversed.

Romanian tuning traditionally began on a high *a*. This may reflect a bigger instrument with more courses of strings.

Mischi uses a variation of the Gypsy tuning in order to further extend the capabilities of his *tsymbaly*. Some notes overlap in the Gypsy tuning, so a small bridge was added for courses 1, 3, and 5 on the right side. Also, at the bottom end of the centre top bridge, a piece was cut in order to provide a moveable bridge, and an extra bass note; which Mischi finds useful while playing.

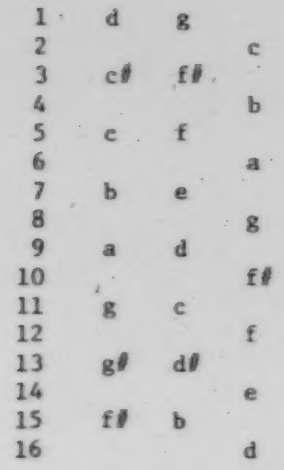
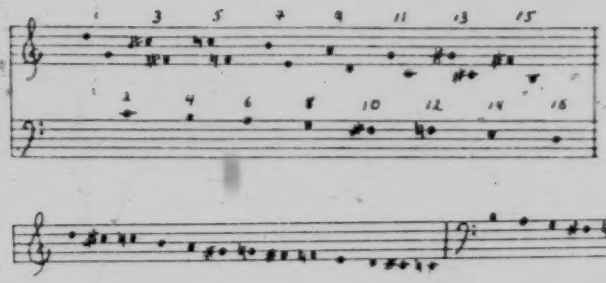


Figure 23. Tsymbaly tuning systems used in East Central Alberta

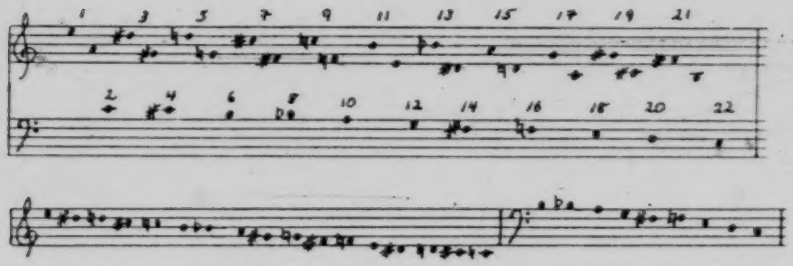
I. Galician (Halyts'kyi) tuning (Rare today)

II. Gypsy (tsyhans'kyi) tuning (Most common)

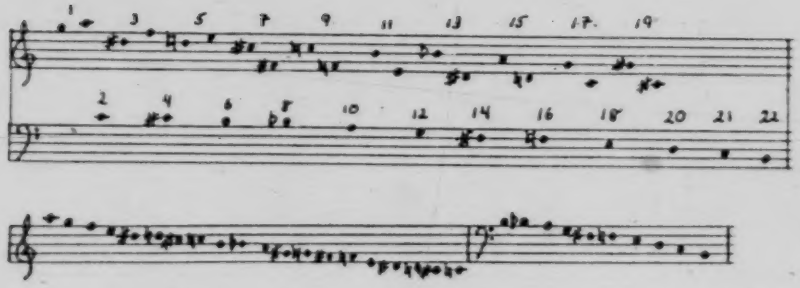
III. Mischi (Extended Gypsy variant)



I. Galician Tuning and Range



II. Gypsy Tuning and Range



III. Mischi Tuning and Range

Figure 24. Tsymbaly tuning systems (continued)

E. Community

The *tsymbaly* makers form their own special community. They behave socially in well defined ways, and their behaviour reflects their own self images, and the expectations of the society as a whole.[153]

As Tom Chychul notes, making *tsymbaly* is a male function in the community. *"Divchata ne buduiut' ale hraiut'."* [Women don't make, only play them]. None of the *tsymbaly* craftsmen or players interviewed has ever heard of a woman making *tsymbaly*.

Esoteric rules exist among *tsymbaly* makers.[154] In order to remain on friendly terms, rules of ethics and etiquette have developed among builders. It is considered impolite to belittle competitors, and it is considered improper to explicitly brag about one's own "superior" work.[155]

In order to advertize himself, the maker repeats word of mouth endorsements. It is far more effective for the maker to repeat other craftsmen, players, or buyers endorsements of the product rather than to quote himself. This has the effect of removing the onus of a subjective,

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[153] Allan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (n.p.: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1964), p. 123.
[154] William Hugh Jansen, "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore," in *The Study of Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (Englewo Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965), pp. 43-51.
[155] Mike Ewanchuk, when pressed, explicitly stated that he cannot talk about his own work, nor about other builders by name.

potentially controversial statement from the makers. It also minimizes potential resentment, from other craftsmen, who might otherwise hear a questionable claim.

Many makers, when questioned, claim no one taught them the craft.[154] It is common for makers to start by measuring other *tsymbaly*, but also by socializing with other builders and implicitly absorbing their knowledge. With established makers, the socializing process involve's a type of barter: trading the odd process or secret for information in return. Most makers are willing to share some information, though a few secrets are usually never told.[155] George Strynadka was taught how to make *tsymbaly* by John Zelisko, who wanted the art continued. John Babichuk, age 74, sold an instrument to a 7 year old player two years ago and has already promised to teach the boy how to make *tsymbaly*.[156] Thus, the tradition continues.

Among the makers exist a few who disregard the rules of etiquette previously mentioned. They keep to themselves and refuse to socialize with other craftsmen or divulge any "secrets". This leads to resentment from other makers. The praise Tom Chychul has for craftsmen such as Nick Supervich quickly turns into resentment when discussing unfriendly makers.

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[154] Mr. Bill Ropchan, Mr. Pete Holowaty.
[155] Chychul regularly exchanges information with Supervich, but has not yet shown him his drilling system. See Chapter 4, Pins and Pegs, pp. .....
[156] The boy, Shawn Gibson, Sherwood Park, Alberta, now age 9, was a participant in the 1984 CFCW Tsymbaly Competition.

F. Marketing

The biggest proof a *tsymbaly* maker can have that he makes good *tsymbaly*, is by selling his *tsymbaly*. As Chychul says: "*Iak by ne buly dobri, khlop by ne kupyv*." [If they hadn't been good, the fellow wouldn't have bought them.] Often a maker will include anecdotes of previous sales in his sales pitch to prospective buyers.

> I sold a couple to Lamont, couple of dolsemars. One dolsemar, I was playing, friend come, and he take me to (how you call) high-rise he was living. And I went there and I have my *tsymbaly* and my violin, and we play. There's a man come from Saskatchewan, and he play violin and the dolsemar. And we play that night and after [. . .] (He's going home and I'm going home and I put dolsemar in box I going to take it home.) He says, "What you doin?" "Well going home." "You not going take that dolsemar." I say "Why not?" (Ah, no, I won't sell it that dolsemar. But what the hell, that time was cheap. Oh, I don't know, I don't remember, 1942, 1943. And that was a very good dolsemar.) And he says "No you're not going take!", "O.K. How much you gi' me?" "How much you want?" I says, "I want 350 Dollars, you want it - take it that *tsymbaly*, or not you won't get." He didn't say nothing. (That his son-in-law). He just pull the money and pay the money and I just pull the money. What the hell! In 2 weeks I have another one like that. I was building pretty fast.'[93]

This story proves that Bill Ropchan makes good *tsymbaly* by showing how much other people want them.

Kinasewych says that, "Dan Chomlak used to tell listeners that if they want to buy *tsymbaly*, they should go to John Kinasewych. This story is meant to prove that that Kinasewich is a master craftsman. The story is also significant because it shows how a different participant in the *tsymbaly* phenomenom, or different *tsymbaly* medium helps

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[93] Taped interview with Bill Ropchan, March 1984.

popularize and support the *tsymbaly* maker and his craft.

Some makers feel it beneath their status as "master" craftsmen to actively promote their products. These makers rely entirely on word of mouth advertizing. They expect buyers to come to them. Also the buyer has little choice of product. Supervich makes one model of *tsymbaly*, which he considers his best. The potential buyer can take them or leave them.

Other makers are more accommodating. They also rely heavily on word of mouth advertisement, but are more likely to actively pursue potential buyers. Tom Chychul is a prime example of this second type. As long as it doesn't compromise his sense of expertise as a craftsmen, he is willing to adjust price and design specifications for customers.

When Bill Ropchan made his first *tsymbaly*, in 1917, *tsymbaly* typically cost $20 or less. Today prices range from $350 to $1,800 for a new set. Chychul sold a miniature instrument at Vegreville, July 1984, for $350. Paul Ewasiuk charges about $1,800. Refurbished old *tsymbaly* can sometimes be found for less.

Prices often reflect time considerations, options (such as pickups), or special materials used (rosewood). However, this is not always the case. The general rule of thumb seems to be that *tsymbaly* makers who live in the city charge more than those who live in the country. As well, quality and price may vary from *tsymbaly* to *tsymbaly*, and maker to

maker. Some *tsymbaly* are more brilliant, others more mellow. Musical tastes vary among both craftsmen and buyers.

Conclusion

Conclusion

This study sought to characterize *tsymbaly* making in East Central Alberta. It was found that few scholarly works deal effectively with the *tsymbaly* tradition in Western Canada. For the purposes of this investigation, processes of continuity and change described in studies of Ukrainian Canadian culture (most notably by Robert Klymasz) provided models for analyzing the social ramifications of the *tsymbaly* making tradition; while works describing Old Country *tsymbaly* provided the closest comparison with the *tsymbaly* made in East Central Alberta today.

For data, this investigation depended primarily on *tsymbaly* makers and other active participants in the *tsymbaly* phenomenon. *Tsymbaly* afficionados (audience and players) were easily found at festivals and competitions. Some of the players and audience were able to identify a few *tsymbaly* makers. In turn, most of the *tsymbaly* makers approached know other *tsymbaly* craftsmen. Thus, a representative and diverse sample of participants was accessible and was used to gather information for this study.

On the basis of information provided, it became apparent that *tsymbaly* players and listeners, the community of *tsymbaly* makers, and the individual *tsymbaly* craftsman do not represent mutually exclusive groups, but are dependent

on each other. Listeners and players provide a market for the *tsymbaly* craftsman's product. The community of makers allows the craftsman to draw on a pool of knowledge of the craft, as well as provides other examples of the art against which he can compare his own work. The individual expression of each craftsman keeps the art from becoming static.

Even today, the *tsymbaly* phenomenon reflects vital links with the past. Newer *tsymbaly* mediums such as festivals, radio, and recordings are extensions of popular Old Time events featuring *tsymbaly*, most notably the wedding. The mediums themselves help popularize each other, and in the process, *tsymbaly*.

The old *troista muzyka* tradition (featuring violin), with which *tsymbaly* were once associated, has evolved into the new Ukrainian Country Western musical tradition. In the process, the role of *tsymbaly* in the orchestra has changed from a secondary to a lead instrument. *Tsymbaly* players thus enjoy increased status in the musical tradition, and the *tsymbaly* have become an invigorating symbol of cultural identity. Though musical styles have changed, and some musical customs are lost, the spirit and vitality of *tsymbaly* music attests to a lively musical tradition.

The *tsymbaly* craft involves more than just construction. By following the section on construction, one can learn to make a proper set of *tsymbaly*; however, as Bill

Ropchan and other makers have stressed, it takes practice and a special talent, or help from an expert to be successful. In essence, tradition, socialization, and the makers' ability to interpret and market their product are also vital aspects of the art.

The same processes of continuity and change evident in the greater *tsymbaly* phenomenon are found when examining *tsymbaly* making. Much of the *tsymbaly*'s endurance can be attributed to their accomodative nature. Today's *tsymbaly* often display adaptations to their new mediums and musical roles. Reflective decals, amplification, and stands help the *tsymbaly* to effectively compete on stage with other instruments.

Early *tsymbaly* makers (such as John Zelisko) and their art still live in the memories of many active *tsymbaly* makers. Early traditions and lore are kept active through oral exchanges of information in the community of *tsymbaly* makers. Likewise, new ideas are disseminated within the community. There is room for variation in the craft, as individual makers may seek to experiment, exercise individual tastes, or reflect different levels of skill among themselves. Tom Chychul provided an illustrative example.

Tom Chychul's *tsymbaly* reflect the basic traditional trapezoidal shape, groupings of strings, and tuning. He uses modern technology, modern materials, and produces the "smaller" sized *tsymbaly* common today. His own processes for

drilling holes, and his own sound hole design reflect his own initiative.

Tom Chychul's *tsymbaly* are representative of and reflect the processes of continuity and change inherent in *tsymbaly* making today. However, no maker's product should really be considered typical, as the individual philosophies of *tsymbaly* makers results in much diversity among the products. Traditionalists try to follow simpler designs of the past. Modernists use new materials and technologies. Craftsmen emphasize their professional finishes. Musicians often stress the musical qualities of their creation. Tom Chychul's product might be characterized as middle of the road between traditional and modern tastes in sound, aestetics, design, and production techniques.

Generalizing about *tsymbaly* construction in East Central Alberta today, some standardization is evident. Increasingly, the size of *tsymbaly*, the type of tuning used, and the style of sticks reflect a tendency toward a more uniform product. Yet, many aspects of *tsymbaly* construction are displaying more variance than in the days of John Zelisko. Craftsmen have access to broader ranges of technologies and materials, and are often keen to experiment with new design ideas.

The present study is intended to show a dynamically active tradition of *tsymbaly* making in East Central Alberta. All the requisites for continuing success of the tradition exist today. The degree to which *tsymbaly* making remains a

productive folk art in the future will depend on a continuing audience generated by popular *tsymbaly* mediums, the retention of *tsymbaly* as a cultural marker (both visual and oral), and an active community of makers exchanging traditional and new ideas of the art among themselves.

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C. Informants

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Ewanchuk, Mike. Taped Interview. Edmonton, Alberta. April 1984.

Ewasiuk, Paul. Taped Interview. Lamont, Alberta. July 1984.

Holowaty, Pete. Taped Interview. Edmonton, Alberta. March 1984.

Kinasewych, John. Taped Interview. Edmonton, Alberta. July 1984.

Mischi, Nick. Taped Interview. Edmonton, Alberta. April 1983.

Oleksiuk, Mike. Taped Interview. Smoky Lake, Alberta. May 1984.

Radomsky, Metro. Taped Interview. Andrew, Alberta. July 1984.

Ropchan, Bill. Taped Interview. Edmonton, Alberta. March 1984.

Supervich, Nick. Taped Interview. Edmonton, Alberta. March.

Appendix I. Glossary

The following is a partial list of common terms used by informants and in this study when discussing *tsymbaly*:

bunt, bunty	course, courses (of strings)
diry	holes
vertity diry	to drill holes
doshka	board
perednia	front
spidnia	bottom
zadnia	back
verkhnia	top
fostyk [khvostyk]	small tail (on sticks)
gvinty	threads (on tuning pegs)
hembliuvaty	to plane
holos	sound [literally, voice]
maie holos	it has good tone
karuk	carpenter's glue, horse glue
karuchyty	to glue
kliuch	key
konyk	top bridge [literally, small horse, pony]
kovban, kovbany	(side) block, blocks
na oko	without measuring [literally, by sight]

pal'tsiatky	sticks, beaters
pidpory	support bridges
pidstavky	sound posts
pyny	[calque] thread used by Chychul for pins and tuning pegs
sapian	soft leather, moroccan leather
skrypka	violin
stroity	to tune
struny	strings
strii	tuning
halyts'kyi	Galician
hutsul's'kyi	Hutsul
rumuns'kyi	Romanian
tsyhans'kyi	Gypsy
ukrains'kyi	Ukrainian
volos'kyi	Wallachian
torhuvaty	to bargain
troista muzyka	traditional grouping of musical instruments, usually consisting of the violin, *tsymbaly*, drum
tsymbal	1) blockhead, simpleton (Andrusyshen) 2) Chychul and Babichuk use it for the singular of *tsymbaly*

tsymbaly	Ukrainian hammer dulcimer
halyts'ki	Galician
hutsul's'ki	Hutsul
rumuns'ki	Romanian
tsyhans'ki	Gypsy
ukrains'ki	Ukrainian
vesillia	wedding
zamok, zamky	lock, locks (joint)

Appendix II. List of *Tsymbaly* Makers

Note. This is a list of *tsymbaly* makers currently living in East Central Alberta.

Babichuk, Mr. John. Age 74. Smoky Lake, Alberta. Made 41 *tsymbaly* and rebuilt 4 more. Copied Zelisko pattern.

Brayer, Mr. Eric. Age 46. Edmonton, Alberta. Made 3 *tsymbaly*. Learned from father-in-law, Bill Wolansky.

Chychul, Mr. Tom. Age 63. Tofield, Alberta. Made 75 *tsymbaly*. Learned from Harry Pidladsky, Chipman, Alberta.

Ewanchuk, Mr. Mike. Age 69. Edmonton, Alberta. Made 14 *tsymbaly*. Brother-in-law of John Zelisko, Andrew.

Ewasiuk, Mr. Anton. Age 68. Lamont, Alberta. Made 6 *tsymbaly*. Brother of Paul Ewasiuk.

Ewasiuk, Mr. Paul. Age 72. Lamont, Alberta. Made 27 *tsymbaly*. Learned from John Kinasewych.

Gargus, Mr. Walter. Age ? [Not Given]. Andrew, Alberta. Made 3 *tsymbaly*.

Holowaty, Mr. Pete. Age 73. Edmonton, Alberta. Made 10 *tsymbaly*. Uncle of popular player Steven Chwok.

Kinasewych, Mr. John. Age 65. Edmonton, Alberta. Made over 100 *tsymbaly*. Learned from a Mr. Holovaichuk.

Knysh, Mr. John. Age 69. Smoky Lake, Alberta. Made 9 *tsymbaly*.

Kolody, Mr. Bill. Age 80. Two Hills, Alberta. Made 7 *tsymbaly*. First *tsymbaly* made 50 years ago.

Lacusta, Mr. Metro. Age 60. Vegreville, Alberta. Made 34 *tsymbaly*.

Lastiwka, Mr. Metro. Age 68. Smoky Lake, Alberta. Made 7 *tsymbaly*. Plays with Radomsky Orchestra.

Mandrusiak, Mr. Nick. Age 60. From Two Hills, now in Lavoy, Alberta. Made 10 *tsymbaly*

Najdziak, Mr. Mike. Age 79. Vegreville, Alberta. Made 8 *tsymbaly*.

Oleksiuk, Mr. Mike. Age 81. Smoky Lake, Alberta. Made 15 *tsymbaly*. Learned from father.

Ropchan, Mr. Bill. Age 83. From Bellis and Lamont, now in Edmonton, Alberta. Made 38 *tsymbaly*. First made in 1917.

Skraba, Mr. Bill. Age 71. Andrew, Alberta. Made 6 *tsymbaly*.

Strynadka, Mr. George. Age 63. From Willingdon, now in Vegreville, Alberta. Made 12 *tsymbaly*. Father made *tsymbaly* 60 years ago. Learned directly from John Zelisko.

Supervich, Mr. Nick. Age 60. From Willingdon, now in Edmonton, Alberta. Made 40 *tsymbaly*. Learned from John Kinasewych. Has Zelisko *tsymbaly*.

Tkachyk, Mr. Joe. Age 67, and Michael Tkachyk. Age 27. Edmonton, Alberta. Made 2 electric *tsymbaly*.

Wolansky, Mr. Bill. Age 69. From Edwin, now in Edmonton, Alberta. Made 7 *tsymbaly*.